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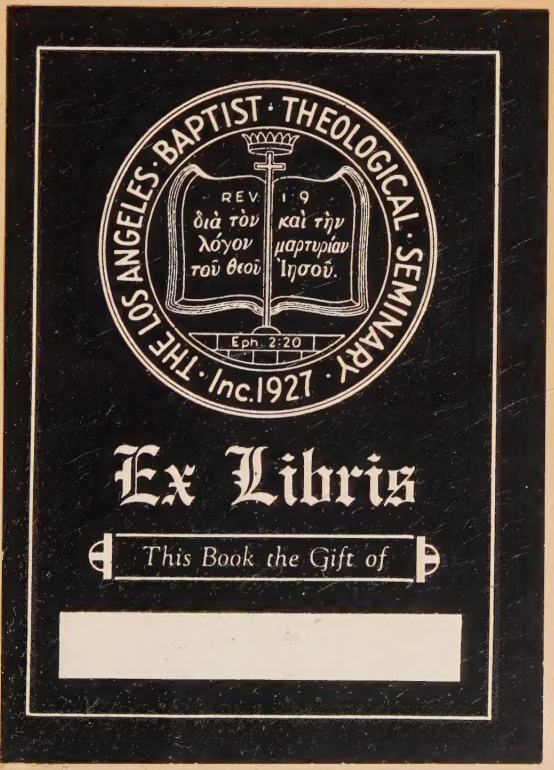

CALEB TO DANIEL

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THE REPRESENTATIVE MEN OF THE BIBLE

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By
GEORGE MATHESON
D.D., LL.D., F.R.S.E.

VOLUME III

CALEB TO DANIEL

NEW YORK
RICHARD R. SMITH
1930

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
BY THE STRATFORD PRESS, INC., NEW YORK

PREFACE

By 'The Representative Men of the Bible' I mean the men of the Bible who represent phases of humanity irrespective of place and time; and I consider them only in those incidents in which they are thus representative. These studies are not historical; they are not critical; they are an analysis of the Portraits *as we see* them—without any attempt to inquire how or when they came. I have imagined myself in a studio, looking at the forms as delineated, and simply asking the question, What did the artist mean? Personally, I have no doubt as to the historical basis for the patriarchal life—not to speak of lives further down the stream. But I have been actuated in the meantime by the desire to find ground that is neutral to the two extremes—the Higher Criticism on the one hand and the Old Orthodoxy on the other. That common ground is the fact that the figures are now before us, and that, if there be a Revelation, it is through them, in the last result, that

the Revelation must come. Here, for the present, hands may be joined, here, for the time, views may be united; and those who differ as to dates and origins can meet in the recognition of a spiritual beauty. I have sought to give the book a semi-devotional tone by closing each chapter with a short invocation or prayer.

I offered the former series of studies as an experiment. I promised that if it met with acceptance I would issue another series of Bible Portraits covering nearly the same period but representing distinct qualities. I am glad that a rapid reception on the part of the public and a favourable recognition by the press has enabled me to fulfil this design. I call this a second series rather than a second volume. Any one who has not read the first may, if he will, begin with the second. Here and there I have made a reference to the previous series; but in every case it is passing and fugitive, and does not for a moment interrupt the context. The sequence of the volumes is of the less consequence because I do not think that either in this or the previous series I have ever struck the same note twice. The selection of Representative Characters

has been in my own hands, and it has been made on the principle that each personality shall exhibit a phase of human nature which has not been exhibited in the Portraits that have preceded it. The strength of the Bible Gallery lies not in the number but in the variety of its representations, and its highest artistic claim must ever be, that on the canvas of human life it has succeeded in delineating 'the manifold wisdom of God.'

G. M.

Edinburgh. 1903.

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THE REPRESENTATIVE MEN OF THE BIBLE

CHAPTER I

CALEB THE EXPLORER

THERE is one respect in which the Jew has more resemblance to the Briton than to any other nation in the world—he has been a great colonist. He has been transplanted into lands the most diverse from his own, and he has flourished there. He has been carried into Egypt. He has been settled in Syria. He has been resident in Babylon. He has sojourned in Persia. He has been amalgamated with Greece. He has been a subject of Rome. He has been a dweller in all the lands of the West. In all these directions he has preserved his nationality; yet he has adapted himself to the new soil.

But, if the Jew and the Briton resemble each other in their power of colonisation, they resemble each other also in this, that with both of them the power of colonisation has been an acquired thing. Neither the Jew nor the Briton has been, by nature, a geographical

explorer. Both have had an original impulse to be self-contained, to keep within their own walls. The *motive* has been different; that of Britain has been an insular prejudice, that of Judah has been a religious isolation. But in each case the effect has been the same—a tendency to shrink within the shell. In both instances the migration has been something thrust upon the nation against its will. The act has been salutary, but it has not been spontaneous; it has been the result of external influence.

Turning specifically to the Jew as he is historically exhibited in the Great Gallery, we are impressed with the fact that he is by nature the man of his own fireside and that he is called from that fireside only by outside voices. His is not naturally the instinct of the swallow—the instinct of migration. Doubtless he is ever stretching towards the future; but it is a national future. What he seeks is a brighter glow of his own fire. His goal is the coming of his Messiah; but his Messiah is not to take him out, but to bring others in. He looks upon the Christ, not as one who will transplant him into other lands, but as one who will transplant other lands into Jewish soil. His motto has

been ever 'Home, sweet home.' If he desired travel, it was not that he might explore, but that he might export. He wanted to make every house a model of his own—the same in architecture, the same in furniture. He would have all things to be fashioned after the pattern of his own mount.

It is this absence of a migratory instinct that makes the type of the explorer very rare in the Jewish Gallery. I take the Gallery of Genesis; I find there much locomotion but little voluntary migration. I see the Primeval Man leaving his first home; but he is compelled to it by the sweat of the brow. I see Cain quitting the sanctuary for a foreign land; but he is driven to it by the shadow of a crime. I see the family of Noah become emigrants; but they are borne on the waters of a flood. I see Jacob flying from his hearth; but it is fear that drives him. I see Joseph passing into Egypt; but it is not as a traveller —it is as a captive. In all the Gallery of Genesis I behold but one voluntary emigrant—the man Abraham. He alone receives an impulse of the *heart* to leave his country and his kindred and his father's house in search of other shores. Yet, even with him, exploration

is hardly the motive. He is rather the missionary than the traveller. He goes not forth to seek information but to impart it. It is no curiosity that prompts him; it is pity. He desires, not a better country, but a better light for other countries. The one voluntary emigrant in the Gallery of Genesis is not a merchantman seeking goodly pearls, but one who has already found a pearl of great price and who longs to reveal it to the sons of other lands.

It is when the Gallery begins to exhibit the scenes of the *desert* that we catch the first trace of the spirit of exploration. In the heart of the wilderness of Paran we see a band of men animated by an impulse unfamiliar to eastern climes—the impulse of the traveller. While India and China remain at home, while Egypt sits down beside her own Pyramids, while Babylon suns herself in the glories she has gathered, this humble desert tribe proposes to explore. Abraham had gone forth without knowing whither he went; he had been content thus to go. He had been in the position of a man who says, 'I will not take lodgings in advance; I shall trust, when I arrive, to find vacant rooms.' But here, in the

desert of Paran, there steps forth a man who says, 'I intend to walk on a different basis; I must know beforehand whither I am travelling.' That man is Caleb the son of Jephunneh. I take him as the type of the explorer—the first type in the Great Gallery of the traveller as distinct from the missionary. He is a member of the earliest geographical society. It had twelve members in all. Their names have been preserved; but none have become immortal with the exception of two—Joshua and Caleb. I think Caleb was here the leader. Joshua was rather an actor than an investigator. He was more for the camp than for the council, more for the hour than for the outlook. But Caleb had something of Moses in him. He had an eye for the future. He was capable of Pisgah glimpses. He was one of those lives who seem always to be pitched upon a hill; he could see things afar off. He is the real hero of this enterprise; he has made the work of exploration his own. Joshua is the actual *conqueror* of Canaan; Caleb is the man who predicted the advantage of possessing it.

In the depths of the desert of Paran Moses addressed this geographical society. What he said in effect was this: 'You are now within

measurable distance of that land of Canaan which has been the heaven of your dreams and of the dreams dreamt by your fathers. You are within range of that country to which you have looked forward as to a second Paradise, which is to compensate you for the Eden you have lost. The time has come when it will be well for you to consider whether the reality will correspond to the dream. It may be that your ideal of glory is not the ideal of glory entertained by your fathers. It may be that the lifting of the veil from this land of promise will reveal it to be what you have not pictured, what you have not desired. Consider well ere you take possession of that which you know not! Examine carefully that ground which you are eager to colonise! Go up and inspect it beforehand! Walk round its bulwarks and study its buildings! Mark the life of its inhabitants and the pursuits of its citizens! Enquire whether your desert troubles are likely to die within its walls, whether you will be allowed to drop your burdens when you enter within its gates! Take heed lest your colony be a calamity, your heaven a heaviness, your promised land a permanent loss!'

I believe this to be the real significance of

the speech of Moses. On any other view we are confronted by a difficult problem. Why should Moses have sent out Caleb and his comrades to explore a land to which the finger of God was pointing! Did not the pointing of that Divine hand dispense with the need of any exploration! Had not God Himself prepared the land! Why commission Caleb and his companions to inquire whether a colony could be planted there! According to the narrative, there never was a doubt on that matter. The entrance of the people was secured whenever they should go up—secured by the promise of God. Their whole march had been a march of faith. Their ability to enter the promised land had never been based upon human resources; was it to be based upon human resources now! Their hope that the gates of Canaan would open to let them in had always rested on the word of the Lord; was it now, for the first time, to rest on the word of *man!* Was faith to drop her wings at the very gate of paradise! Was trust to become bankrupt within sight of the city of gold! Was the confidence of getting admission into the promised land, which had originally reposed in the *fact* of the promise, to seek its anchorage on a

totally different shore—the explorations of a geographical society!

That, I say, is the problem which naturally arises. But, if you take the speech of Moses as I have paraphrased it, things will appear in another light. For, as I take it, the question before the geographical society was not the *possibility* of getting an entrance into Canaan; it was the *desirability* of getting that entrance. The land was ready for the people; were the people ready for the land? Were they morally developed in a sufficient degree to enter upon their birthright? Had they attained mental maturity? Could they appreciate as yet their coming destiny? Granting that Canaan was a city of gold, a city of gold is not the ideal of a child; it would prefer a city of tinsel or a city of fireworks. The exploring expedition was really an exploration of the mind; geographical in form, it was spiritual in import. Its goal was self-examination. The report which Caleb and his compeers were to bring was to decide, not a question of geography, but a question of philosophy. It was to test the present capacity of the people of God, to determine whether the heart of Israel was ripe for its inheritance.

The truth is, the children of Israel as described in the Great Gallery are related to the physical Canaan very much as Emanuel Swedenborg felt himself related to the Christian heaven. To Swedenborg the question never was whether a man would get into a special physical locality. He had, as I interpret him, no doubt whatever that, so far as mere space was concerned, the good and the bad would occupy the same position—stand by the same crystal river, gaze on the same limpid fountain. It was their *spiritual* localities that were to differ. Standing on the same spot, they were to be oppositely affected; the pure eye was to see beauty, the impure eye was to read deformity. I am no Swedenborgian, but I have always felt that he has here touched a profound Christian thought. In one of the parables of Christ there is introduced a remarkable conception. There is pictured a man who has actually succeeded in getting into heaven. He has entered among the guests bidden to the King's table. So far as admission is concerned, he has passed the rubicon and secured the prize. But on his admission, his troubles only begin. They originate in the fact that he has not the adequate

robe—that his own personality is defective. He is unfit for his environment, unsuited to his surroundings; that which vibrates to others with the joy of wedding-bells, reverberates like a dirge to him. Swedenborg, doubtless, had this passage in his mind when he formed his conception of heaven.

Even such was the conception entertained by Moses of the physical Canaan. He had no doubt whatever that Israel would get in. The question in his mind was, what would she do when she did get in? Would she find her ideal realised? Was she ready for the destined land? Was she sufficiently grown to participate in its pursuits? Ought not she to have a preliminary test applied—a test, not of the land's beauty, but of her own ripeness? Let her destiny be spread before her. Let her have a glimpse of that country of which she had dreamed. By her acceptance or by her refusal of the proffered cup would it be known assuredly whether she had reached maturity.

Therefore it was that Caleb and his band went up—twelve chosen apostles sent to explore the coming heaven. They were not chosen on spiritual grounds; that would have been to deprive the test of all value. The ob-

ject was to determine what the *average* mind would think—not what would be the judgment of the élite. In point of fact, there were only two superior minds among them—Caleb and Joshua; out of any twelve taken at random, you will seldom get more than that. Now, I have often put to myself an imaginary problem. Let us suppose that twelve men were Divinely selected to have a preliminary vision of the Christian heaven with the object of reporting its nature to their fellow-men. Let us suppose that, to make them representative of their fellow-men, the selection was made without reference to spirituality and wholly on the ground of investigative powers. The question I put is this, What would be the probable result of such an exploring expedition? And I think the answer must be that there would not be found more than two out of the twelve who would approve the vision. It is almost certain that at the sight of the Christan heaven ten of the company would start back in dismay—not appalled by the difficulty, but appalled by the facility, of getting in. For they would see there the last thing they expected to see—a life of sacrifice at the centre. Whatever grapes of Eshcol they might

behold, whatever gates of pearl they might gaze on, whatever streets of gold they might survey they would always recognise behind these objects the presence of that form which they had regarded as the symbol of misery—the Cross. The skies of the nightless Paradise would be obscured by the shadow of God; and all the music and dancing would not induce them to go in!

Now, this is the actual position of the twelve explorers of the physical Canaan. They came to the land of their dreams; they entered within the gates; they stood spectators of the scene. And, in presence of that scene, ten of their number grew faint with dismay. They had pictured something different, something opposite. They had expected luxurious ease, voluptuous rest. Here, in the very interior of Canaan, was a vision of sacrifice—the image of a Cross! The land which they had deemed the home of luxury revealed the prospect of long and arduous labour, of struggle with alien powers, of burdens by night and day! It was altogether the reverse of what they had pictured in their fancy. Instead of minimising their cares, it promised to increase their cares, to add to their weights, to intensify their contact with

pain. The effect was immediate and disastrous; the ten refused the prize. Only two of the twelve explorers were willing to make trial of their heaven—Joshua and Caleb. Of these, I think, Caleb was the more eager. Joshua had many great days to come; I think this was Caleb's special day. Joshua can claim his Gibeon and his Jericho and his passage of Jordan; but this little spot is Caleb's own. It is his one laurel wreath, his bloodless, his unobtrusive triumph. Bloodless though it is, it is a grand victory. We see a man standing up in almost solitary protest against the cry for regress. We see a man trying to convince his disheartened comrades that they are abandoning solid gold, that the country they despise is really a scene of promotion. It is a noble spectacle—none the less noble because to these comrades, to that generation, Caleb's call was vain. Another generation was to justify him, to join him; for the present, the voices of the ten outweighed the voices of the two. When the people received the report of the majority and found that report to be bad, they cried with loud voice that they would not go. It was in vain that Caleb pointed to the grapes he had gathered at Eshcol; it was in vain he

tried to tempt his countrymen. Caleb was before his time—forty years before his time. The light he expected from the morning was to fall on his declining days; but the morning and the mid-day were to be spent in hope deferred. The man who could keep his hope burning when the torches of the million were extinguished is entitled to be called one of God's heroes.

There are, in the field of speculation, two opposite classes of men whom we equally associate with the idea of sacrifice—those whom an age thrusts prematurely forward and those whom an age steadily keeps back. As the type of the former I would take King Saul; he was the victim of a premature passion conceived by his race—the desire to have a king. But the type of the latter is Caleb; and he has a still larger representation. He stands for a very wide constituency which has its members in all lands and in all times. There is no sphere of history in which you will not meet with that phenomenon—the man who is kept back by his generation. The figure of Caleb, first seen in the desert of Paran, meets us again and again as the ages roll. We see him at ever-recurring periods looking out

upon the sea of life, and discerning in the blue expanse islands which other eyes cannot perceive. We hear him calling out to his fellows, 'Come and let us explore this new region of the earth; give me ships, give me money, give me men!' But ever the answer is the same, '*We* see no islands there; we behold no sphere for enterprise—nothing but the waste of waters, nothing but the ocean waves!' Caleb is deemed under a delusion—the island is only in his eye; the land of which he dreams exists but in his heart. Caleb has to bear in silence the burden of his weight of glory.

In all that generation of disappointed Israel the man most to be pitied was the man whose ideal was not broken. I think, in looking at this picture, we bestow our compassion in the wrong quarter. We centre our pity on that generation of Israel which shut against themselves the gates of their earthly paradise. But I think the real object for commiseration is the man whom they shut out in shutting out themselves. Caleb is the tragedy of the play; the exclusion of the multitude is in one sense its comedy. That thousands of men, on the adverse report of a geographical committee, should voluntarily turn away from the heaven

of their dreams, is a conception in which there is something grotesque. But the spectacle of that crowd holding back a man who desires to enter in, the spectacle of an individual life debarred from the enjoyment of his paradise by the simple fact that his comrades are not ripe for the same heaven—this is something more allied to tears than to laughter. The one thing which dries the tears is the sublime spirit of sacrifice which lies beneath it. Caleb acquiesces in the postponement of his own heaven. A Christian apostle says that he would be content to be accursed for the sake of his brethren. Caleb is at all events content to *step down* for the sake of his brethren. He takes without a murmur the lower room—the room where his brothers dwell. He consents, during forty years, to wear a garb inferior to his own—a garb which associates him with the rank of souls far beneath him. He accepts without complaining the command to seek the vale. He conceals his aspiration. He hides his contempt for the sordid throng. He gives no hint that he is above their business. He joins them on their own level, in their own work. He never tells his love; he buries his sorrow. He takes up his brothers' cares—cares about

inferior things. He puts his hand to the duties of the desert when his heart is up in Canaan. Like a greater than himself, he turns his eye from the opened heavens to contemplate the fact that there is no bread in the wilderness.

Regarding that crowd in the desert which had shut against themselves the door of Canaan, there is one point in the picture which has often struck me. They refuse to enter Canaan, but they never dream of remaining in the desert. The alternative in their minds is not between going forward and standing still; it is between going forward and travelling back. If they demur to go on, it is not that they may encamp but that they may retreat. As the ideal of the future disappears, there rises the ideal of the past; their cry is, 'Let us get back to Egypt!' They call for a new leader—a leader whose watchword shall be, not 'advance,' but 'retire.' The glories of hope have faded; they resolve to glorify memory. The sun of fancy has ceased to light the hills of Canaan; they will try to kindle it on the plains of Egypt. Egypt, while a present experience, had been the reverse of a glory; but, when the light faded from the future, the past caught a fictitious glow. It is ever thus.

When our prospect of the evening becomes overcast, we gild with glory the memory of our morning sky. In no circumstances can man dwell in the present; curtain his Canaan, and he will fly back to Egypt. You and I cannot live in the hour; if we are not to go forward we must go back. Our alternatives are hope or memory, Canaan or Egypt, the land of promise or the land of retrospect. The intermediate spot is ever desert—a barren waste. Thought cannot dwell there, never seeks to dwell there. It must have either wings for to-morrow or wings for yesterday; it must 'fly away' if it would be at rest.

BE mine, then, the wings for to-morrow, O my God! If I get first the wings for to-morrow, I shall then be able to go back. Memory cannot bring hope, but hope can adorn memory—even dark memory. Seen from the hills of Canaan, Egypt may seem very beautiful; its toils may be glorified, its pains may be justified. If Thou art preparing me for a heaven of sacrificial love, these toils, these pains, are already justified. If my Canaan were a mere pleasure-ground, every tear shed in Egypt

would be a waste of time. But when, like Caleb, I look through the crystal bars of Thy city and see that the cross is the crown thereof, I understand it all. I understand why Thy roses have been red, not white. I understand why drops of blood have strewn life's garden. I understand why my will has so often been thwarted, why my schemes have so often miscarried, why my road has so often been interrupted. It is because Thy land of Canaan is a land of sacrifice and I am preparing for that sacrifice. It is because the rose of Thy heaven is the passion-flower of Calvary. It is because the centre of Thy throne holds a Lamb that was slain. It is because the messengers of Thy will are ministering spirits. It is because Thy resurrection life keeps the print of the nails. It is because the lowliest are the greatest in the kingdom of Thy glory. The bondage of Egypt will be a golden memory when I accept the vision of Thy land of Canaan.

CHAPTER II

BOAZ THE KIND

THE representative men of an age are not necessarily the great men. Greatness is certainly *one* of the permanent things in humanity; but it is far from being the only permanent thing. Human nature keeps through the ages not only its mountains but also its valleys and its plains. Any gallery of representative men which professes to be adequate must include with the hills the plains and valleys too. Genius is eternal; but so is gentleness. Master minds are ever recurring; but so are minds of ordinary mould. There is a gold which glitters *not,* which shines not in history, but which is none the less a permanent possession of man; it is that species of gold which belongs to life's beaten path and dusty way. I have often been struck with the words of Paul in depicting the attributes of *love.* He applies to it both a telescope and a microscope. When he looks through the telescope, he cries, 'Love bear-

eth, believeth, hopeth, endureth all things.' But when he takes up the microscope, he sees that love is equally unfading in its minutest forms, and he expresses this in the words, 'Love is kind.'

In looking at this Bible Gallery I have asked myself the question, Is there any figure which represents pure and simple kindness? There are many poetic qualities represented; Enoch has his walk with God, and Moses his glimpse of faith, and David his gift of song. There are many solid qualities represented; Noah has his power of exhortation, and Joshua his power of serving, and Job his power of waiting, and Isaac his power of obeying. But is there no place for a quality which is neither poetic nor solid—the power of simple kindness? Is there no place for that quality which cannot manifest itself by flights nor yet reveal itself by mechanical movement on the ground, but which exists merely as a still small voice in the heart? I feel that there ought to be such a place, that without it no gallery of portraits can represent humanity. Where shall we look for this lowly form? Where in this Bible Gallery shall we find a picture which is dedicated to the homely at-

tribute of kindness? All the portraits we have yet surveyed are on a large scale. Adam holds the fate of humanity, Noah the fate of a world, Abraham the fate of a kingdom—the spheres are all too important for mere good-heartedness. Can we meet with any spot in the whole portraiture sufficiently limited in its range and sufficiently humble in its scope to furnish the theatre for a life of unobtrusive kindness?

Now, there is one such portrait in the Great Gallery. It is that of Boaz of Bethlehem. He is distinguished from all the others by the unique smallness of the sphere in which he dwells. He fills a very narrow niche; but it is a niche that otherwise would be unfilled. He represents but one quality; but nowhere in the Gallery is that quality represented so perfectly. He is distinctively the man of kindness. This is his abiding glory; by nothing else does he live in memory. The men of his day would have valued him for something impersonal. From a worldly point of view he had many advantages. He was of good family. He had great social influence. He was possessed of much wealth. He belonged to a tribe which was already beginning to take the lead in Israel. But by none of these things does this

man endure. Their remembrance is only kept alive by the remembrance of another quality, which his contemporaries would have passed by—the possession of a tender heart. More than any one I know within the compass of the Old Testament, Boaz survives by 'the grand old name of gentleman.' The nearest approach to him in the New, among those reputed merely human, is Barnabas. Boaz, like Barnabas, was a 'son of consolation.' He was so, without *trying* to be so—by the sheer force of that quality which for want of a better name we designate 'good-nature.' He did not *aim* at being kind, did not recognise that he was kind. He was so innate a gentleman that he knew it not. Like Moses, 'he wist not that the skin of his face shone.' His countenance was veiled to his own goodness. He was one of those who, if commended for his charities, would have used the words of surprise put into the mouth of the saints at the Day of Judgment, 'Lord, when saw I Thee hungry or thirsty or sick, and ministered unto Thee!' Kindness was to him as natural as to a bird its song.

The most striking feature in this kindness of Boaz is the apparently trivial nature of the

things in which it showed itself. It was not in large donations; it was not in heroic sacrifices. It was in things so small as to seem unworthy of record. Strange as it may sound to say so, I think it is this seeming triviality of sphere that brings Boaz nearest to the Christian standard. According to that standard it is the smallest sphere which most conclusively proves a man, 'He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much.' We often hear the phrase, 'a Christian gentleman.' What is a Christian gentleman? Wherein does a gentleman of the School of Christ differ from a gentleman of the mere worldly school? I have no hesitation in saying that the difference lies in their comparative power of descending into minute things. It is the difference between law and grace. There is a law of etiquette as well as a law of Moses—a social code which the man of the world must not transgress. But he may refuse to transgress this code, and still be outside the Christian standard. The Christian standard goes down *below* law. It does more than the Book of Etiquette commands, more than is taught in the world's school. The Christian gentleman, as much as the Christian saint, is justified by grace—not

law. He would not be satisfied with keeping any set of social commandments. His authority is derived, not from Sinai, but from Calvary—not from any conventional code, but from the dictates of the individual heart.

Now, Boaz is a gentleman of the heart—not of the salon. He does things, not only which the salon would not demand, but which the salon might forbid. His attitude to his dependants is remarkable. When he goes to his daily work, he salutes his servants with what would now be called a shaking of hands. His first greeting to his reapers is not the voice of the master to the employed; it is the voice of the well-wisher to his friends. He comes into the field and says, 'The Lord be with you!' and from a hundred lips and hearts the response comes forth, 'The Lord bless thee!' That is a relationship which goes beyond etiquette. It is outside the boundaries of all law; it is pure grace, or, what is here the same thing, graciousness. It is a relationship which is founded on the principle, 'Be a man first, and an employer afterwards.' It starts with the recognition, not of subordination, but of equality. It realises the agreement beneath the difference, the unity underlying the separation.

THE MASTER'S COLLEGE

In an age when the gulf between master and servant was more marked than it is now, the reciprocal greeting of Boaz and his reapers meets us like an oasis in the social Sahara.

But the crowning glory of Boaz appears in his treatment of one individual life—the fair and gentle Ruth. It is she that has made his name immortal. All his wealth, all his property, would not have saved him from oblivion if he had not stooped in kindness to that young woman. The difficulty is to tell the story with adequate simplicity. As told by the painting in the Old Gallery, it is a tale sublimely artless, charmingly unadorned. It leaves on the mind the impression of one who is depicting something the beauty of which he does not know. There is no striving for effect, no contemplation of effect. The scene is displayed prosaically, mechanically. Yet the result is high poetry—idyllic poetry. It is a picture of ideal virtue in the midst of surrounding debasement, of primitive purity in an age of artificial sins. It is a daisy planted on a granite rock; it is Jacob resting on a pillow of stone; it is a pearl reposing in the depths of a stormy sea.

One afternoon, when the reapers had finished their work, Boaz came into his field to

survey the result of their labour. His eye lighted on a fair girl gleaning the fragments that remained. She was doubtless meanly clad; in any case, the act bespoke her poverty. Yet the fine eye of Boaz detected, beneath the folds of the mantle, the light of better days. 'Who is that?' he asks. They answer, 'It is a young woman from Moab, who married a son of one of your kinsmen—Elimelech of Judah.' 'What has brought her here?' he says. They tell him that she has become a widow, and has left her own land through love of her widowed mother-in-law, Naomi. Here was rather a startling piece of news for a rich and respectable proprietor in the land of Israel! He finds himself to be kinsman to a young woman who is an object of charity in his own field and earns a livelihood through the kindness of his workmen—the native, also, of a foreign country, a heathen country, a country which in the traditions of the past had never been friendly to his people. Moab had been the eyesore of Israel. It had blocked her passage through the desert. It had given her its solemn malediction. It had leagued against her with Midian. It had proved a grave to her lawgiver, Moses. Was it now to corrupt her labouring men! Were

not the women of Moab proverbially lascivious! Was not this new importation into his field a thing not to be tolerated! Did not personal pride and national principle alike counsel him to stand haughtily aloof from this woman, and treat the tie of kindred as an unacknowledged bond!

So Boaz might well have thought, so ninety men out of every hundred would have thought. But Boaz was one of the superior ten. He resolved to speak to this gleaner. He did speak to her; and his first favourable impression was strengthened. His feeling towards her took the form of a protector, a father. He forgot that he was a landed proprietor—a rich man, a man of high connection; he became simply a man. He was filled with compassion for the stranger. He ceased to dread that she would corrupt the reapers; he feared that the reapers would corrupt her. With almost feminine insight he provided a safeguard. 'Stand fast by my maidens!' he says; in other words, he surrounds her with a cordon of young female companions on whose wholesome influence he can rely. In that moment and by that act he became one of the moderns. He was, unconsciously to himself, the inaugurator

of a principle—a principle which, after lying underground for long centuries, was in the fulness of time to burst into flower and fruit.

I said, in the previous chapter, that Caleb might be called the founder of geographical societies. I think Boaz has the distinction of being the founder of another class of societies. The institution which Caleb founded was intended to stimulate young men to explore. But the institution which Boaz inaugurated had a converse object; it was meant to deter young women from exploring too soon. It was designed to keep the female heart as long as possible from a knowledge of the darker shades of life. It is that form of seminary which in modern days is called sometimes a Girls' Friendly Society, sometimes a Female Guild, sometimes a Young Women's Christian Association. We will not discuss the name; under all names the thing described is the same. The need felt by Boaz is the need felt by the twentieth century. The ancient Jew and the modern Briton have alike perceived that even the purest individual life cannot begin the world in isolation. Before both the same problem looms. Young Ruth is coming into the world's field, and the reapers are not

yet the angels. What is to be done with her—so simple, so artless, so confiding? Shall we allow her to take her chance in the big field—with its non-angelic reapers? Shall no attempt be made to receive her into everlasting habitations? Amongst the many mansions of this world—which are not identical with the mansions of the Father's house—shall no one say to this damsel, *'I* am the place prepared for you'?

And the answer given to the question by modern Britain has been the answer given by ancient Israel—'Stand fast by my maidens!' Ruth, before entering the town, has been met at the gates—met by a band of sisters, and cared for. If our age is morally better than the age of our fathers, the change must in no small degree be referred to this cause. It is a question of high importance whether good or evil shall get the start, for it is often the start that in life decides the race. In the case of Ruth the Gleaner, the influence of the Girls' Society was patent and powerful; she was kept pure, she walked sedately. Perhaps it may seem that in her case I have attributed too much to the Society, too little to her own past. I may be reminded that according to the

picture in the Gallery hers had always been a soul of burning love. Had she not manifested the most romantic sacrifice! Had she not left country, kindred, home, to obey the dictates of an impulse of the heart! Was this a woman who would be *likely* to go wrong! Was this one who *required* the aid of a Girls' Friendly Society! Would not her path in life have been amply secured without the intervention of Boaz! But I think the danger of Ruth lay just *in* that romantic element of her nature which had driven her from her native land. Who are those women that are most apt to go morally astray? Is it the cold, the phlegmatic, the passionless? No; it is the women of strong impulse, of fervent feeling, of impassioned enthusiasm. There is a form of evil which tempts, not the bad, but the good, which appeals to that part of our nature seemingly the most unselfish. The light which leads astray appears, as the poet says, to be 'light from heaven.' We feel that a colder heart, a more selfish heart, would have been exempt from this temptation, would not have experienced this special form of Satan in the wilderness. It was Ruth's romantic impulse that made her an object of solicitude. The woman who in the

face of home and kindred could say to Naomi, 'Where thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge,' was capable of braving all conventions if an inner fire were kindled. The spectator in the Gallery feels that the Girls' Friendly Society is no *accident* of the picture.

The truth is, I differ somewhat as to the common literary judgment on the Book of Ruth. The prevailing view regards Ruth herself as the Hamlet of the piece. This is not my opinion. To me the centre of the drama is Boaz. If he is a homely figure, it is because he is home-*like*—modern. Homely as he is, he is the real turning-point of the drama. It is he that averts the danger from the Moabitess. No peril had ever befallen Ruth equal to that which beset her as a gleaner in the field. She was nearer the verge of calamity then than at any past period. Neither her widowhood nor her poverty nor her exile revealed so impending a cloud as hovered over her amid the cornfields of Bethlehem. What she needed was a protector—a tower of refuge. She found one. Boaz was the man for the hour, the only man that would have suited the hour. He brought to her the one thing she required—

protective kindness. On no other bridge could we have trusted her to cross the rubicon. There are services for which great qualities do not avail, which need the touch of a *lowly* hand. No brilliant figure could have been so artistic for the place and time, no image of beauty could have so graced the picture as does the image of this homely and unadorned man with the heart of human kindness.

And so the master and the gleaner met daily among the golden sheaves; and step by step their mutual interest grew. On her side, gratitude deepened; on his, tenderness increased. You will read wrongly the story of Boaz if you think that his kindness to Ruth came from a preliminary passion; it would be more correct to say that his passion came from a preliminary kindness. His first interest in her was a humanitarian interest; it was such as he would have felt to any one similarly circumstanced. Nor do I think it is correct to say, as is popularly said in such cases, that his protective kindness *gave place* to another feeling. The love which came into his heart was no other feeling; it was but an intensifying of the first impression. Love's forms are protean; in this sphere, as in others, 'whatsoever a man

soweth, that shall he also reap. There are as many different kinds of love as there are different kinds of character. There is a love which is impulsive and vehement—which takes its kingdom by violence and will brook no delay. There is a love which is sober and practical—which expends its treasures not in words but in deeds; it is more concerned about the feeding than about the anointing, more occupied with the essentials than with the spices. There is a love which is intrinsically a state of friendship; it is founded on mutual sympathy and based on a community of ideas. And there is a love which is before all things maternal—which, whether it exists in mother or father or brother, is distinctly protective in character. All of these are produced by the respective natures which reveal them.

Now, the love felt by Boaz was a maternal love. He was a man with a mother's heart, and he took Ruth into that heart. He gave her that form of affection which belonged to his nature—the overflowing kindness of a large soul. The pastoral which began in tears closes in the sound of wedding bells. It is a remarkable marriage; it is the marriage of

Moab and Israel. I do not think an artist would have dared to invent such a picture. A marriage of Moab and Israel was a marriage of the Gentile and the Jew. Such a union was beyond the *imagination* of later times. A novelist of the days of Esther who ventured to conceive such a thought would have been treated as an outcast and an alien. A poet of the days of Josiah who embodied such a thought in words would have been greeted with the execration of the land. It was only in an age previous to the consolidation of Jewish ideas that the possibility of such a marriage could have been contemplated. Through all the subsequent history of Israel Moab remained her most stubborn foe. Conquered by David, held for a brief space by his successors, wrested even in the hour of its bondage, it broke away from the yoke in the days of Ahab and returned to its chain no more. It was the permanent symbol of all that was antagonistic to Israel; the last thought which would naturally have suggested itself was the nuptial tie.

Yet, according to the Bible Gallery, this marriage was the very making of Israel. It was the germ-cell from which her glory sprang. From this marriage came the splendour of the

house of Judah; from this marriage came the line of David; from this marriage, at the end of the line, came a greater than David. Looking at the matter merely from the side of art, it is well worthy of consideration. Why is it that from the very beginning there is admitted into this Jewish Gallery an element of Gentile blood? This much we can say, that it is this early union of the Gentile and the Jew that alone makes the Gallery consistent with itself. It is by the primitive germ-cell that I understand the latest growth. The latest growth is the human soul of Jesus. It is, by the admission of those *not* His disciples, a soul in which are combined the religious fervour of the Jew and the intellectual freedom of the Gentile. Where did He get that union? From above? No; this is a phase of the human—not the Divine. From David? Doubtless—David's was a many-sided life. But where did David get it?—the problem is only driven further back. There must have been an admixture of blood of which David was himself the offspring. We are driven back to the marriage bells of early Bethlehem—those marriage bells of Ruth and Boaz, of Moab and Israel,

which proclaimed the primitive union of the Gentile and the Jew.

And so the birth-hour of Israel as a nation originated in an act of kindness. It came from no mightier source, from no more potent evolution. Doubtless the contemporaries of Boaz would regard him as not within the range of practical politics. They would look upon him as a very useful man—good for benevolent subscriptions and estimable for acts of charity, but too homely in his deeds to be a maker of history. Their eye would rest upon other and more noisy forms—great public speakers, great statesmen, great warriors. How completely has their judgment been reversed! History has passed all the loud forms by. It has left behind in obscurity the magnates of the time—the speakers, the statesmen, the warriors. It has taken up the homeliest deed of the homeliest man and made it immortal. It has chosen the most modest flower of all the garden. It has planted the Empire of Israel on a deed of loving-kindness and a thought of tender mercy. The last has been first; the humblest has been exalted. The kingdom which culminated in the Rose of Sharon has found its beginning in the Lily of the Valley.

PLANT in my garden, O Lord, this Lily of Kindness! I often neglect it for more specious flowers. I seek the red rose of a great sacrifice —something which will reveal the shedding of blood. I say, 'If I could be a missionary, if I could give my life for Thy cause, that would be something Thou couldst accept; but I have neither the fire nor the wood nor the lamb, for such an offering!' And so I fold my hands in impotence. Yet, all the time, there is a field in front of my own door where I can find a larger sacrifice. Ruth is gleaning there —young, helpless, poor! Ruth is gleaning there—with a heavy heart and a drooping spirit! Ruth is gleaning there—beset with temptations on every side! I shall get no *glory* in helping her, it will add nothing to my name. Just there lies the sacrifice, O my Father! Thy flower for me is the Lily of the Valley. The world prizes it not; it is a flower that makes no garlands for the great—it is simply kindness. But after many days it will adorn *Thy* garland. Ruth will reign by the kind word spoken; Ruth will revive by the kind deed done. The bread I have given will be her bread of life; the water I have given will be her water of life; the joy I have given will be

her staff of life. My valley shall be exalted; my lily shall be lit with the morning sun; my touch of tenderness shall be transmitted to generations still unborn. I shall find my song of welcome in the music of the future; inspire my heart, O Lord, for its yet humble strain!

CHAPTER III

GIDEON THE HUMBLE

THE scientist tells us that in the world of physical nature there is always the same amount of force existing throughout the whole. There is never a diminution, there is never an increase; the sum of natural energy is the same yesterday and to-day and for ever. It is my opinion that in the moral world there exists an analogous law. We speak of some ages as ages of brilliancy, of others as ages of spiritual dearth. When we are referring to the individual lives of men, the distinction is quite legitimate. But I do not believe that in the mass there is any difference effected by time in the sum of moral energy. It is not a difference of quantity but a difference of distribution. There are, I think, two typical periods recurring throughout the history of man —the age of crowning heights and the age of unbroken plains. The former is the period of great men—the time when vast energies are

concentrated in individual breasts. The latter is the time when humanity is very much upon one level—when no record exists of present achievements, or of contemporary men rising above their fellows. Take, for example, the history of England. Compare the reign of Elizabeth with the period of Richard the Third. Popularly speaking, the former is an age of spiritual life, and the latter a time of spiritual deadness. In reality, they are both equally living, but their life is differently distributed. In Elizabeth's days the larger share is absorbed by a remarkable row of figures—the Shakespeares, the Bacons, the Marlowes, the Fords, the Massingers, the Drakes, the Cecils. In the time of Richard, on the other hand, no *individual* is spiritually very rich, but the share of each is evenly divided over the mass, and it may be that the mass itself is on a higher scale.

There is an age depicted in the Bible which is essentially the period of great men. It is the record of that time embraced in the narrative of the Book of Judges. I do not mean that the men of that book are specially great; I mean that their greatness is specially utilised. None of them approaches Abraham or Moses

or Joshua. But neither Abraham nor Moses nor Joshua is an isolated life; each moves in sympathy with his clan; his life is the life of his tribe. Far otherwise is it with the Judges of Israel. They are men selected out of the mass to initiate a movement to which the mass are inadequate. Abraham, Moses, and Joshua are each the product of a previous civilisation. But the Judges of Israel have to *make* their civilisation. The Divine call comes to each at a time of national collapse, and summons each from among lapsed masses. Each has to go forth at first alone—to create his own world. He has to awake the sleeping multitude, to rouse the dormant energies of his countrymen, to kindle into life the smouldering embers of an ancient fire. When we speak of the evolutionary growth of nations, we are apt to forget the individual *leaps* in the process. We are apt to ignore the fact that there are flowers in many a prairie which by a quickened development spring up in a single night. We are apt to lose sight of the truth that there are ages in which the prominent factors are, not laws, not principles, not processes, but men—men who have suddenly been stimulated to take the initiative in a new movement and the plunge in a

new sea. Such is the age described as the reign of Israel's Judges.

One of the most remarkable of these men from a representative point of view is Gideon the son of Joash. The remarkable thing about him is not his achievements; it is his character; and it is that character which we propose to study. To learn how a man is representative of humanity we ought to forget his special environment. So shall we do with Gideon. We shall forget, as much as possible, his local surroundings. We shall forget 'the Midianites' and 'the Amalekites' and 'the Children of the East.' We shall forget the prescribed method by which he was to save Israel. We shall remember only that he was called to deliver his age from darkness and to lift his country from corruption. We shall try to lay our hand on that in him which is universal, permanent, liable to be repeated in all the coming years.

At first sight the character of Gideon is a very inconsistent one. It seems to be composed of two opposite sides—towering aspiration and drooping humility. On the one hand we see a man aflame with a great ideal and restless under its pressure. He has a prompting angel who is ever pointing him upward. He

looks upon his sordid and benighted countrymen. There floats before his eyes the possibility of becoming their redeemer. He feels that their present position is incongruous with their past history. Are these the men that were brought up out of the land of Egypt! Are these the men that were kept alive in the desert by the direct power of God! Where are the *signs* of such a guidance; where is the evidence of such a protective care! If he, as a son of Israel, has been thus privileged, should he not live worthy of his privileges! Was it not his duty to aim at the high standard set before him, nay, to lift up others to that standard! Had not his very nationality given him a mission, made it incumbent on him to fight the battles of the Lord! Was there not imposed on him a great, a responsible destiny—a destiny which he must not seek to evade! Was he not bound to become the *saviour* of Israel!

So speaks the one side of his nature—the aspiring side. But there is another side. This same Gideon is the most humble of men—the most shrinking, the most cowering, the most timorous. Our very introduction to him finds him in a timid attitude—hiding in a cellar from marauding bands. He is deeply im-

pressed with the thought of his own incompetency. He realises the poverty of his family, the small repute of his kindred, the special insignificance which he himself exhibits in the eyes of his countrymen. His angel may applaud him, but his fellow-men decry him; and he feels that the voice of the men will drown the voice of the angel. So far from trusting the voice of his angel, he asks material signs. In all ages—even the most modern, men in moments of self-doubt have resorted to these. I knew a very distinguished student who had an extraordinary belief that his lucky number was thirteen. Instead of hoping for success on the ground of his own merits, he would become sanguine as to the receipt of university honours if, between certain points, he had happened to take just thirteen steps—neither less nor more. Gideon's signs are something of the same nature. 'I will put my sacrifice on the fire; if the fire consume it quickly, I shall be a success.' 'I will leave a fleece exposed to the dew; if in the morning it is wet while all around is dry, I shall know that I am bound to win.' Now, on the part of the student and on the part of Gideon, this was very great humility. It was an absolute distrust of their

own personality, and abandoning of all confidence in anything within them. The man whose faith in his good fortune rests on outward omens must be a very humble man. I recur, then, to the question, how is this consistent with the other part of the character of Gideon? If he and the university student had been minds innately poor, we should not have marvelled; but that a man capable of lofty aspirings should be as distrustful of himself as if he were a village rustic—this seems an unaccountable thing.

But *is* the village rustic distrustful of himself? That is the question; and in the answer to that question lies the solution of the whole mystery. I say that the village rustic, in proportion as his rusticity is deep, is increasingly removed from humility. Humility is incompatible with absolute ignorance. Little children are not humble. Why? Simply because humility requires some degree of enlightenment. Have we considered these words of the Master, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven'? On what ground does He promise the kingdom to the consciously lowly? It is because the consciously lowly have already *seen* the kingdom,

'Theirs *is* the kingdom.' It is the vision of the kingdom that *makes* them lowly. It is their view of light on the hill that shows them the shades in the vale. It is by the sight of green fields that a man recognises his gutter. It is by the hearing of sweet sounds that the ear learns surrounding discord. It is by the contact with pure souls that the heart finds the presence of its own sin.

There is, then, no contradiction, but a beautiful harmony, between the two sides of Gideon's character. So far from interfering with his humility, his aspirations are the cause of his humility; without these his humility would not exist. It is the brightness of his ideal that makes him shrink in dismay. He beats upon his breast, and cries, 'Unclean!'—but he does so in the temple of God. He says, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!'—but he says so in the *presence* of the Lord. All the misery about his personal state, all the tossings and tempests of his soul, come, by his own admission, from his vision of the angel. He recognises the night after he has seen the day.

When Gideon has set *himself* right he proceeds to set right his people. Where does he

begin? Is it by casting out their enemies? Is it by improving their environment? Is it by clearing from their path the outward sources of temptation? No; it is by changing their ideal of God. Gideon knew well that all bad things originate in bad thoughts. He begins, therefore, with the thoughts, and with those thoughts the most central of all—the thoughts about God. A man's ideal of religion is the root of his whole conduct. A bad ideal of religion is worse than no religion at all. Atheism pure and simple would in my opinion be merely paralysing; it would be what Paul attributes to the climax of trespasses and sins—a state of deadness. But the belief in a bad God is not a state of deadness; it is not even a loss of energy. A bad ideal may lend to a man a lurid strength, may fill him with a life and power as vivid and as dangerous as the drunkard's delirium. The peril of Israel at this period was not irreligion; it was too much religion of a bad kind. She had conceived a low ideal of God, that is to say, a low ideal of what it is to be Divine. She had begun to worship Baal. To worship Baal was to worship sensuousness, if not sensuality. It was to reverence above all things the bodily nature of man—the lust of

the flesh and the lust of the eye and the pride of life. It was to reverence the pursuit of animal pleasures and the exercise of animal strength. It was to reverence the oppression of the weak by the strong, the reign of violence and the empire of physical force. Hosea says, 'The just will live by their faith'—in other words, 'their ideal will *make* them just.' But the other side is equally true—that the *un*just will live by their faith. A man whose ideal of the Divine is Baal will be made unjust by his faith as surely as, by his, a Christian is justified. All badness, as well as all goodness, is the fruit of an idea. We are purified or defiled at the *fountain*—in the thought.

And so, Gideon begins at the fountain. He sets himself, before all things, to disenchant his countrymen, to dispel their false ideal. How can he better dispel it than by associating it with feebleness! He will show that, so far from protecting *them,* Baal cannot protect Himself; he will break His image, he will cut down His groves, he will prove the emptiness of His shrine. But even in his moment of zeal there is a reassertion of his native timidity. He is afraid to break the image in the light of day; he fears to cut down the groves while it

is noon. He will wait for the hush of night. He will tarry till the world is asleep and the pulse of humanity beats low. Then he will sally forth in the silence and in the solitude, and, unseen by man, he will do the work for God.

And here there presents itself to my mind a great artistic contrast. The form of Gideon stands over against another figure—that of Elijah. There is just so much resemblance between them as to emphasise the difference. Both are animated by a horror of idolatry and both have transmitted their name as the breakers of idols. Yet the course of their progress is very different—indeed, opposite. I would call Gideon an inverted Elijah. Elijah is a man of fire to whom grace comes in the form of timidity; Gideon is a man of timidity to whom grace comes in the form of fire. Elijah begins in full flame and gradually mellows down; Gideon begins in trembling and gradually gathers heat. Elijah bursts upon our view in the court of Ahab—in the glare of notoriety and the blaze of public opinion; but we find him afterwards collapsing in the cave of Horeb, and experiencing the truth that the course of life's chariot does

not run smooth. Gideon first comes before us under the shadow of night—lurking in secrecy and hiding in humility; but he ends where Elijah began—in the full view of all Israel and at the right hand of power.

And the first step to Gideon's success is effected, not by material force, but by the power of the spirit. When the worshippers of Baal come to the shrine in the morning, they find His sanctuary in ruins. They have no doubt that the perpetrator of the sacrilege is Gideon. Why, then, do they not put him to death? The answer given by the narrative is at once clear and striking; it is the very ruin of the shrine of Baal that makes them despise their idol. They cannot adore weakness, even in their God. The Roman could; he could allow Vulcan to have a lame foot and Cupid a blind eye. But then, the Roman worshipped power of endurance, and power of endurance is compatible with calamity. The worshipper of the physical cannot adore calamity. Whatever mars the symmetry of sight is by him reprobated. The fall of Baal described in the picture is a fall from the heights of the *heart*. It is a *mental* process. Gideon has shown His impotence. Gideon has battered down His

altars. Gideon has mutilated His image. Gideon has cut in pieces His groves. Has Gideon suffered for the crime? Has the lightning struck him? Has the blast withered him? Has the pestilence assailed him? No; he is alive and well he has proved the victor, the uninjured combatant. If Baal had been able to punish him, He would have punished him; if He cannot avenge His own wrongs, He is unfit to protect Israel.

The effect of this silence of Baal is the assembling of multitudes around the banner of Gideon. His ranks swell from day to day, till his adherents number thirty-two thousand. He resolves to proceed from the expulsion of false ideals to the expulsion of their worshippers. It is at this stage that he passes from the life of the devotee into the life of the warrior; and he carries into the life of the warrior the humility which has marked his life of devotion. Before going forth to make war on the corrupters of the land, he takes an extraordinary step—a step which can only be understood in the light of his native lowliness of mind. He reduces his thirty-two thousand men to three hundred. The act seems at first sight to betoken extreme confidence, a spirit

of arrogant self-assurance. But, if you look deeper, you will see that it springs from the utter abandonment of self, from the determination to sink the glory of his own name. If he goes out with thirty-two thousand, the victory will be attributed to the arm of Israel. He is jealous for *God,* jealous for the manifestation of the Divine power. He will not suffer human agencies to bear the credit of that help which he refers to God alone. He will not have men say, 'Israel triumphed by her splendid resources, by her vast numbers, by her well-appointed army.' He will prevent them from saying so. He will reduce his material strength. He will bury his deadliest weapons. He will dismiss the bulk of his fighting men. He will go forth to battle accompanied by only a handful. So will he prove conclusively that the secret of his strength has been God alone.

This is very much what Paul means by saying, 'We have our treasure in *earthen* vessels.' The idea is that in any hour of success our richest religious comfort comes from our sense of inability to have produced that success. It is quite possible, indeed, that in the hour of his triumph a man may say, 'I always

knew I was clever!'—it is quite possible and it is quite legitimate. But the comfort in this is not a religious comfort. The religious comfort of any success is the sense that I have had nothing to do with it, that my resources were inadequate to achieve it. The more its accomplishment has been removed from human power the more we see God in it—the more we recognise in it the working of a Divine will. And what is true of outward success is not less true in a region which is still nearer to Christian experience—the region of inward peace. Let me explain what I mean.

Paul says that the peace of God is distinguished from all other kinds of peace in this, that it 'passeth understanding.' He means to say that it cannot be explained on any natural principles. It has the capacity of entering the heart when all the avenues are closed—when the doors are shut, when the windows are shut, when the apertures are hermetically sealed. There are very few of us who have not had this experience. There have been times when to the eye of all the world we have seemed to be absolutely miserable—times when, by any human calculation, we *ought* to be absolutely miserable. Clouds and darkness are round

about us; thorns and briers bestrew our way. And yet, the strange thing is that our aspect of absolute misery is deceptive. We are not miserable—spite of the clouds and darkness, spite of the thorns and briers. We feel an unaccountable strength, an inexplicable support. It has come when heart and flesh have failed in themselves to find any remedy. It has come with a sense of surprise—like the advent of an unexpected guest. It is the feeling which I attribute to the Psalmist when he utters the words, 'Thou hast put gladness in my heart more than in the time when corn and wine increased.' He is crying out with wonder. He is expressing astonishment. Notwithstanding his outward causes for depression, he feels happier than he was when he was pointed to as a favourite of fortune. His experience seems to contradict his environment. He ought to feel heavy-hearted; his heart is light. Surely this is a strength coming from above!

Now, every religious man wants to have this experience. It is the greatest argument for the supernatural which human life reveals—an argument founded on no theory, on no dogma, on no flight of fancy, but on sober and

positive fact. It is no wonder that Gideon wished to have this experience. That he did wish to have it, is beyond all question. It was this which made him reduce his thirty-two thousand to three hundred. He said to himself: 'I want to have an evidence of *God* in my life. I want to have a peace that passeth understanding—a peace that shall be established by no big battalions, by no preponderance of material strength, by no superiority in the physical weapons of conquest, but in spite of the absence of these. I want the kingdom of righteousness to triumph through means unknown to me, uncalculated by me. I must be able to feel in my hour of victory that I have been fighting God's battle and that God has won it. How shall I learn this if my natural arm is strong and my natural force unabated! Only under the shadow of my own night shall I have evidence of the heavenly star; only by my own nothingness shall I recognise the will of God!'

Here is a great paradox—humility made a source of confidence! But it is a paradox which has its ground in truth. Timid men are humble; but humble men need not be timid. There is a humility which makes us bold—

Christian humility does. What does Paul mean by saying that where he is weak there he is strong? He means, 'My greatest confidence comes from the fact that I have succeeded in doing things which to me were impossible—above my talent, beyond my capacity; by this I know that God is working for me and in me.' Take any period of your life in which you have felt a supreme confidence in a guiding Divine hand. What has been the ground of that confidence? Simply the fact that your success in the past has been no work of yours. You feel that you have been a poor creature, without adequate knowledge or adequate foresight; yet you are conscious that you have climbed heights beyond your natural power and plucked fruits beyond your natural reach. You say, 'I have been guided all through yesterday by a power, and in a way, which I cannot comprehend; may I not trust, under the same impending cloud, that the hand which led me yesterday will guide me through tomorrow!'

LORD, give me the peace of Gideon! Give me the peace of mind that can subsist amid stress

of body; give me the calm of soul that can live amid storms of sea! Often is Thy peace bestowed when the world's peace is denied. Often my heart, like Gideon, sees the thirty-two thousand melt into the three hundred. Make my heart like the *strength* of Gideon! Send me the calm that cannot be accounted for! Send me the peace that cannot be explained! Send me the joy which the world cannot justify! Send me the gladness independent of glitter, the radiance independent of riches, the brightness independent of earthly benefits! Reveal Thy rest in my wrestling, Thy crown in my cross, Thy kingdom in my cloud! Let there ever be a dove in my deluge! Let Thy Spirit brood on the face of my waters, and say to all the chaos, Let there be light! Let my light precede the green grass, precede the herb and plant and tree! Let it come before the flowers come, before the fruits come! Let it shine while my world is yet a wilderness, while as yet no vines have enriched my field! So shall I learn that *Thy* peace is a peace that passeth understanding.

CHAPTER IV

JONATHAN THE GENEROUS

It has often seemed to me a very singular thing that those parts of the Old Testament which come nearest to the heart are precisely the parts which belong to its rudest periods. The Old Testament has its ages of civilisation —its times of luxury and refinement. But these are not the times when it makes its deepest appeal to the instincts of the heart. The glories of a Solomon are intellectual glories; the glories of a Jeroboam the Second are military glories; the glories of a Hezekiah are pecuniary glories. But in all these periods I look in vain for one spot dedicated to human emotion. There are wars and rumours of war, there is peace and the produce of peace, there is luxury and the refinement of luxury; but there is no display of that unfettered feeling which impresses so powerfully the simple and the childlike. If you want to find that, you must go to the rude ages—to the iron ages.

You must go to that desert where amid internecine strife moves an Abraham, an Isaac, a Jacob. You must go to that early Canaan in whose wilderness there is spread a table for Ruth and Boaz. You must go to that period immediately following the captivity when Israel, amid the roughness of a new beginning, burst forth into songs which have entranced the ear of the world.

Such a period is that of Saul. It is a wild age—an age of winds and waves; but the winds have struck the harp and the waves have wafted melody. Saul and his age were animated by a spirit whose home was earth, not heaven; yet they form the environment of one of the sweetest souls that have ever breathed—the man Jonathan. He is a rainbow in a storm. The son and heir of the fierce Saul, the hereditary fruit of a tribe whose symbol was a wolf—this man is the embodiment of human tenderness! He is one of those lives who annul the distinctions in the ages—who make us say with the angel of the Apocalypse that time shall be no more. Jonathan belongs to *all* seasons of development; you will find him in spring and autumn, in summer and winter. He is not too mature for the

dawn; he is not too primitive for the noonday. There are men whose speech is so free from all provincialism that we cannot tell from what part of a country they come. There is a mental, as well as a linguistic, freedom from the provinces. There are lives whom, if they stood apart, we could not attribute to any special century or any particular phase of progress. Jonathan is one of these. We cannot speak of him as a mountain rose; we cannot describe him as a lily of the valley. He belongs to mountain and valley alike; on the height and in the depth he is equally at home.

Let us stand, then, in the Gallery, and contemplate this figure—so remote and yet so near, so distant in time and yet so close to modern sympathies. What is that quality in which he is representative? We must put our hand on that in which he is distinctively representative. It is very easy to find in Jonathan a modern quality; but that is not enough. We must discover that feature which marks him out from the rest of the Gallery. We might say, for example, that Jonathan was a man of valour; but was not Joshua the same! We might say that he was a man of piety; but was not Moses the same! We might say that he

was a man who exhibited the tenacity of friendship; but was not Elisha the same! In none of these things is Jonathan distinctive. In so far as he merely represents a colour already delineated, he is not entitled to a separate description. He can only receive this on the ground of some peculiarity. What is that peculiarity? What is that quality which makes the figure of Jonathan a distinct portrait exhibiting an element of human nature which has found in him a special delineation?

I think this distinctive feature of Jonathan is generosity. I regard his portrait as the direct counterpart of the portrait of Lot. I have defined Lot to be the man who never gave discount; Jonathan is the man who never omits to give discount. If Lot represents that class of men who exact their twenty shillings in the pound, Jonathan represents that class who are willing to accept nineteen. If Lot is the man of the law, Jonathan is the man of the gospel. If the problem of Lot is how little good he can do without incurring blame, the problem of Jonathan is how *much* good he can do without receiving praise. Lot has for his record 'I have wronged no man'; Jonathan's epitaph is 'I have made many glad.' Lot and Jonathan

belong to different stages of the religious life. Lot represents the soul under the dread of God; Jonathan represents the soul under the love for man. The one is, by nature, unjust, and is only kept honest through policy; the other is almost impolitic in generosity, and requires to be restrained in the sacrifice of his own interests.

The generosity of Jonathan is not confined to a single sphere. Many are generous within a single sphere and very mean outside of it; I have known a man give hundreds to a Sunday-school and refuse a shilling to a starving author. Jonathan is a generous man all round. We are apt to think of him merely as the friend of David. In this we do him injustice. A man may be generous within the limits of a private friendship who outside that boundary is hard and cruel. There are very few, indeed, even of the hardest and most cruel, who have not a little corner in their heart kept green for somebody—a corner which they deck with lavish hand, which they store with plenteous fruits and strew with beauteous flowers. Jonathan has his special *friendship,* but he has not his special generosity. His generosity is wider than his friend-

ship—goes beyond its boundaries. Jonathan has a beauty of his own—apart from his relation to David. Before we meet him with the Singer of Israel, we meet him alone. Originally, he stands before us in his own person and shines by his own light. Let us consider the picture which his opening life reveals.

When the curtain rises, we are in the midst of the camp of Israel. Saul has declared war against the Philistines, and his son Jonathan leads the army. To the Jew, the service of war was as much a religious observance as the service of the sanctuary. When he went forth to battle, he went forth to battle with the enemies of the Lord. It was this that lent solemnity to his military life. He had no personal adversary; his adversaries were the adversaries of God. War was with the Israelite a sacrament. His standard of battle was a church symbol; his rallying-cry was a religious invocation; his victory was a proof of Divine favour; his defeat was an indication of Divine displeasure. And because war was to him a religious service, he prepared for it by cultivating humility. Other nations on the eve of war seek to realise their strength; Israel sought to realise her weakness. Her hour of

conflict was an hour of Divine Service, and she made ready for that Service by self-abnegation. Saul was in accord with the spirit of his race. He prepared for war by imposing a fast on the army. He enacted that the soldiers should be put on short rations. He sent them out to battle furnished with a slender commissariat—hardly enough to keep soul and body together. He did so, not in the interest of economy, but in what he believed to be the interest of religion. He wished, by the starvation of the outer man, to mark his sense of the fact that the wars of Israel were wars of the Lord.

Let us pause here for a moment to note the inveteracy of old beliefs. It is strange how persistently the idea has survived that the value of Divine worship lies in its *difficulty*. I remember being consulted as a clergyman by a young woman of high education on the subject of her spiritual state. She was distressed about her failure to fulfil the religious duties of life. I was aware that at this very time she was living a life of sacrificial devotion to a blind father. I asked if this service of hers was not a religious duty. She answered, 'Oh no! it cannot be so, because that

brings me such joy; it is the delight of my heart to serve my father!' I scarcely know whether I was amused or sad. The incident called me back to the days of the slender commissariat—back to the days when the host of Israel was made to fast that they might please the Lord. No human father would be pleased with a fasting service from his child. To any parents of earth the child's service is precious in proportion as it is painless. Man is accused of making God in his own image; why has he not done so here! Why has he not transferred to the service of a Divine Father that sense of privilege, that feeling of exultant joy, which he typically associates with the service of an earthly parent! In this instance, at least, he has erred by *not* fashioning his God after the likeness of men.

To resume the narrative. Jonathan is incensed by the military fast imposed by his father. He is incensed both on personal and sympathetic grounds; he objects to the short rations for himself, and he objects to the short rations for the army. Do you think the former sentiment weakens the force of the latter? Do you think Jonathan would have given more evidence of generosity if he had been per-

sonally indifferent to the physical privation? I think the reverse. I hold that there is no generosity in giving to another a thing which the donor himself deems valueless. The word 'generous' literally means 'humanitarian'—sympathetic to the *race*. But how is a man to be sympathetic to the race except by transferring to the race the feelings of his own individual life. Why do I pity your pain? It is because I have felt your pain. I pity it in proportion as I have felt it. My sorrow over any sad experience of yours is exactly in the measure in which the same experience has affected myself. I think, therefore, that the artist has made a happy stroke of the pencil in placing in the foreground the *personal* discomfort of Jonathan. Nothing could have more emphasised his generosity. A hungry man stung into sympathy with the hunger of others, a man in the hour of personal destitution quickened into the pain of beholding the destitution around him—that is the acme of generous feeling. If Lazarus, at the very moment when he is a beggar at the rich man's gate, can remember that he is only one of a thousand and can pity the nine hundred and ninety-nine, Lazarus has

already reached the bosom of Abraham and won a place in the paradise of God.

Jonathan, then, prince though he was, was a friend of the masses, and was alive to their burdens. He felt that the masses would be more religious if they were better cared for. In this he was right. When a man becomes religious he should be able to bear the cross; but the cross is not a good *introduction* to religion. Christianity always placed the crown first; it spread a table in the wilderness before it revealed the decease to be accomplished at Jerusalem. Nay, I say it with reverence, Christianity's Divine Founder began with a draught of joy. He beheld the flowers of Galilee ere there were platted for Him the thorns of Judea. Jonathan looked upon the burdens of the people, and they were not pleasant in his sight. He perceived that these burdens were barriers at the very threshold of the religious life, and therefore at the very fountain of national prosperity. It added to his pain to reflect that these burdens were inflicted by his father. He saw that the oppressing of the poor came from the high places—the places to which by birth he himself belonged. His sympathies went out from his own

class towards the burdened classes. He attached himself to what would now be called the Liberal Party. He threw in his lot with the democratic section—with those who clamoured for an increase of popular privileges. He became the darling of the people, the idol of the masses. His father looked upon him with suspicion—would have put him to death but for the favour of the multitude. Saul felt that Jonathan was undermining his political power. In reality, the youth was undermining his *own* power. His was a most disinterested benevolence. He was taking a course which must inevitably empty himself, strip himself of despotic empire. In an age which reverenced the Divine right of kings, this youth beheld the glimmering of *another* right which was Divine. There broke upon him the vision of a charter granted to man as man. There dawned upon him the truth that the individual soul was more than the servant of kings. He began to realise that the unit had from God a charter of his own—that he had the Divine right to be protected, to be provided for, to be fed and housed and clothed. When that thought breaks upon a king, it is daybreak; but it is a daybreak which

causes him to halt upon his thigh; he can no longer, in all the days to come, aspire to a sceptre of absolute dominion.

But now in the life of Jonathan the scene changes. When next the curtain rises, we meet him in a new environment. He is no longer the favourite of the people. He has done nothing to forfeit their favour; but another has stepped into his place. He has been eclipsed in popular esteem by a rival. Who is that rival? Here lies the sting of the position—it is a rustic lad, a shepherd boy, who has as yet done no deed of prowess and earned no title to fame! His attractions are a fine appearance, a winning manner, and a gift of music. But these have captivated the multitude. The democracy have wheeled round. David is nearer to their own class than Jonathan. They feel that he knows more about their hardships, their difficulties, their daily toil. The thought begins to steal over them, 'Should we not have better times if this young man were king!'

The eye of Saul detects the danger. He sees the multitude strewing David's path with palm leaves, and he trembles for his own kingdom. There arises within him a bitter jealousy of the new favourite. Formerly, the

interests of Jonathan had seemed against his own; he now feels that he and Jonathan are exposed to a common danger—the danger of losing their dynasty. What is more, from every worldly point of view, Saul was right. It is a mistake to conceive that his jealousy of David came from insanity. It would be more correct to say that his insanity came from contemplating his real grounds for jealousy. We miss the point in Jonathan's character if we fail to see that it was not his interest, not the interest of his house, that he should befriend David. Saul was never less mad than when he threw the javelin at the minstrel boy. He threw that javelin in behalf of his son Jonathan. It was an act of family devotion—an act which, in his opinion, might save in the future deeper shedding of blood. For the outward fortunes of Jonathan, it was always desirable that David should die.

Now, it was through this stone wall of severance that the heart of Jonathan pierced to the heart of David. The love of Jonathan for David rests upon a totally different level from that occupied by the love of David for Jonathan. David's love for Jonathan had no barriers; it coincided with his interest. But

the love of Jonathan for David had every prudential argument *against* it. He puts out his hand to save from the destroying hand of his father a man whom the popular voice had predicted to be his own supplanter. In this he is animated by a purely personal liking. He is an absolute spendthrift for the sake of love. Nothing could more powerfully express the attitude of his mind than the passage in 1 Samuel xviii. 4, 'Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.' It is a typical statement; it describes in one sentence the whole trend of his heart. From beginning to end, the love of Jonathan for David was a disrobing, a divestiture. In every act of friendship, in every deed of devotion, in every outstretching of a protective hand, he was stripping himself of a royal garment. He was unarming himself, ungirding himself, sapping the foundations of his imperial strength —and all to gratify an impulse of human affection.

There are, I think, two forms of generous love represented in the Old Testament Gallery; the one is typed in Joseph, the other is

portrayed in Jonathan. They are both expressions of love's sacrificial power; but they express it differently. The one is love sharing riches with its object; the other is love participating in the poverty of its object. Joseph lifts his humble brother up to the height; Jonathan descends from the height to meet his humble brother. Joseph stands amid the treasures of Egypt and says, 'Come up, and be filled'; Jonathan plants himself beside the toiler in the field and cries, 'I have come down to share your struggle.' Joseph shows his generosity by clothing his tattered neighbour in a coat as many-coloured as his own; Jonathan manifests his by putting off his gorgeous raiment and preparing to assume the dress of his dependant. There have always been in the world these two forms of generous love. Even the high table-land of Christian experience —where we might expect such distinctions to disappear, reveals these two. There is a love which imputes to me its righteousness, and there is a love which bears my sin; I would call the first 'charity' and the second 'compassion.' Charity says, 'I will believe you good until I find you bad'; compassion says, 'I know you are bad, but I put myself in your

place.' Charity clothes men in her own garb of virtue till she has discovered their natural attire; compassion seeks the men of mean attire and bids them to the banquet. Charity gives the suspected man the benefit of a doubt; compassion claims kindred with him of whose guilt there is no doubt at all. Charity is a mental Joseph; compassion is a spiritual Jonathan.

To return to the *historical* Jonathan. There is yet one feature wanting to complete the picture; and it is supplied by the Great Gallery. We have seen this youth recklessly endangering all his material prospects for the sake of an individual friendship. The question arises, to what extent were the material prospects of Jonathan a matter of any interest to him? We measure a man's sacrifice, not by what he gives, but by what he feels. There have been many who, like Esau, have sold their birthright for a mess of pottage—not so much from their attraction to the pottage as from their disparagement of the birthright. Was Jonathan one of these? Did he lavish upon David what he desired not for himself? Were the cares of state repulsive to him? Was the pomp of royalty nauseous to him? Was

the glitter of rank wearisome to him? Was he at heart an ascetic—a man to whom worldly interests were nothing, to whom the greatness of his country mattered not? There have been such, even among the crowned heads of the world. There have been kings who have disrobed themselves, thrown aside their sceptre, cast their diadem into the sea, and buried themselves in a cloistered cell. And in these cases we habitually judge that their love for the cloister is not to be proved by the amount of their sacrifice. They have given up the kingdom because they loathe it; their disrobing is a disbanding; their lost crown is a lost care. Is this the thought of Jonathan? Is he weary of the world, sick of the sceptre, indifferent to the fortunes of Israel? If so, his love for David is not proved by his sacrifice. Where shall we find an answer to this crucial problem?

It comes from the sublime pencil of the artist himself. The last scene of all is also the completing scene—the scene without which the picture would be unfinished; it is the battle of Gilboa. Jonathan dies fighting for his country, fighting for his kingdom against the Philistines. I used to think it a pity that

the delineation of this narrative thus closed; it seemed a breach of art that the gentle life of Jonathan should end on the battle-field. But now I see it all, and it is all very good. I see that this apparently iron feature is that which gives softness to the whole picture. It supplies the missing link to the proof of Jonathan's love. It tells us that this man's kindness to David was not the result of hatred to imperial power. It tells us that his country was dear to him, that his dynasty was dear to him, that his father's house was dear to him—so dear that in their service he could die. In that magnificent elegy which is associated with the name of David and which has rung, not only through the Jewish Gallery but through all the galleries of earth, there is emphasis laid on the fact that 'Saul and Jonathan in their deaths were not divided.' It is a grand reflection. They had been much divided during life; it seemed as if Jonathan had no love for his country and his home. But the last hour revealed his devotion to both, and, in so doing, it magnified the proof of his love for David. The man who would strip himself of his armour to serve David could put *on* his armour to die for his country. How dear, then,

must David have been, how generous the heart of Jonathan! What Jonathan had been willing to sacrifice was no disregarded possession, no unprized treasure, no wealth of which he was weary. It had been something for which he was ready to die; it was something for which he did die. Gilboa throws back its lurid light upon the scene of morning love and makes it doubly beautiful. It lends to that morning what the morning itself did not reveal—the vision of a great sacrifice.

LORD, grant me this love which dwelt in Jonathan! I think it is greater than the love which dwelt in Joseph. The masses are not ready to be lifted up to *me;* but they are quite ready for my descent to *them.* I thank Thee that Thine own earliest love has been a stooping love, a bending love, a self-emptying love. Not at first were we ripe for the mandate, 'Bring forth the fairest robe and put it on him!' Not at first were we fit for the adoption ring and the welcome home. Not at first could we participate in the music and the dancing which spoke the joy of our Father's house. And because we could not come to Thee,

Thou hast come to us. Thou hast disrobed Thyself, discrowned Thyself. Thou hast taken our rags for Thy raiment. Because we could not meet Thee in Thy glory, Thou hast met us in our Galilee. Thou hast joined Thyself to the reapers in the field of Time; Thou hast borne the burden and heat of their day. Thou hast broken the bread of daily toil—yea, and blessed it too. Thou hast claimed communion with man's desert hours, his struggling hours, his fainting hours. Thou hast walked amid his sea of troubles and breasted with him the waves. Thou hast dwelt with him in his times of mountain solitude and felt what it is to be alone. Thou hast stood in his hospitals; Thou hast watched by his sick-beds; Thou hast grieved beside his graves; Thou hast assumed his garb of labour ere asking him to wear Thy robe of righteousness. How generous, O Lord, has been Thy love for man!

CHAPTER V

MEPHIBOSHETH THE DEFORMED

I CAN imagine the question asked, Why pause before a portrait like this? It seems at first sight an unfruitful subject of study. Here is a man, distinguished for no great quality, an object rather for pity than for admiration—an abject man, a crouching man, an almost servile man! Amongst the *brilliant* sons of the Gallery are there not enough to choose from! Why select as one of the representative men of humanity one who even in the *Jewish* annals figures so slightly, and whose character has left no impress on the annals of mankind! Is not the examination of such a picture a waste of time!

I answer, no. It supplies a distinct desideratum. Remember what I am seeking in these studies. It is not a collection of brilliant representative men. It is a collection of men each of whom will represent something new and different from all that has gone before. My aim is, not to make a magnificent assemblage, but

to make a varied assemblage. The first question I have asked myself in standing before each portrait has been, Is this untrodden ground?—untrodden by myself? Where I have found any portrait to be simply the reproduction of an old experience, then, however brilliant its features and colouring may be, I have passed it by. Where, on the other hand, I have found a portrait which expresses a phase of human nature not expressed in all the previous survey, then, however homely be the features and however modest be the colouring, I have deemed it worthy of a lingering gaze.

Now, the portrait of Mephibosheth belongs to the latter class. It exhibits something unique. It embodies an element which is not only unrevealed in our previous survey, but which, if I mistake it not, will not be found again in any part of the Jewish Gallery. What is this unique element in the picture of Mephibosheth? What is this unparalleled feature which has made a plain face the object of universal interest, and given a permanent attraction to a countenance essentially commonplace? It is the nourishing of a deformed man by the high places of the earth; it is the world's first respectful recognition of the claims of human decrepitude. The

very unheroicness of the man has made the case stronger. If he had been an Epictetus—a poor body with a rich soul, we might have said that he was accepted in *spite* of his deformity. But when we see a *commonplace* object of decrepitude loaded with the gifts of charity, when we see kindness showered on an Epictetus *without* genius, on a Talleyrand *without* sagacity, on a Pope *without* poetic insight, we know that the calamity itself has been the cause of the benevolence.

I have said that this is the world's first recognition of the claims of decrepitude. Neither Jew nor Greek were prone to recognise these claims. Jew and Greek were both rendered unsympathetic by the same cause—religious prejudice. These nations have often been contrasted; but there is a point in which they are at one. To both, the evidence of Divine favour is the unmarred visage. It is vain to say that the Greek is æsthetic and the Jew religious. I would rather affirm that to the religion of each, æstheticism is the common goal. The child of Greece and the child of Israel are alike worshippers of the symmetries of life. To the one, as to the other, the unblemished is the unblameable. That a man could be physically blighted

and at the same time spiritually blest, that a life could be famished by earth at the very moment when it was favoured by heaven, that an outward cross could have in its own nature the dignity of a celestial crown, was a thought which never occurred to the popular mind in either nation. Remember that, to each, Church and State were one. To be a useless member of the State was to be a useless member of the Church. To be physically blemished was to be spiritually impure. To be divorced from the service of man was to be excommunicated from the service of God.

Accordingly, in all the previous Gallery of Judea we have found no place for the incurable. There is abundant illustration of benevolent *healing*. Whenever the physical calamity is contemplated as capable of removal, it is freely sketched by the artist's pencil. We see Aaron walking amid the pestilence and pouring forth torrents of successful prayer. We see Elijah standing beside the death-couch of the young man of Zarephath and calling back the life to earth. We see Elisha prescribing a cure for the plague-stricken Syrian and allowing him to cleanse his leprosy in Israel's native stream. There is never wanting a Bethesda for

the lame that are destined to walk; there is ever provided some Ananias for the Saul who is destined to see. But where the lame are never to walk, where the Sauls are never to see, we look long in the Gallery for any delineation of human help or refuge. The active sympathy for the incurable has been a very late growth, an autumn growth. It requires a charity deeper than medical care, a charity that can live when all prospect is dead—live when hope is dead. To sustain a drooping strength which has capacities for recuperation is a great thing; but it is not the most arduous thing; the very presence of hope gives power to charity. But when there is no chance of recuperation, when there is no possibility of doing more than preserve the fragments that remain, then charity must serve by night, and its service is no summer task. A work like this needs the circling of the suns.

But while it is not surprising that our previous survey has given us no specimen of this class, it is all the more gratifying to come at last upon the missing object. Here, in the portrait of Mephibosheth, we find the thing for which we have been seeking; and our hearts are glad. The Bible Gallery re-asserts its repre-

sentative character, its all-embracing character. It presents us in the world's spring with one specimen of a flower which is only to become prevalent in the world's autumn; it shows us the first-fruits of the promised land. If in the portrait of Boaz we saw the anticipation of a Girls' Friendly Society, we see in the portrait of Mephibosheth the anticipation of a Home for Incurables. Let us examine it for a moment. The scene is touching in its modernness. It appeals to an experience which has rather grown than lessened with the years—a sense of the retarding element in the struggle for survival. It shows us how a life may be impeded by the fault of another life over whose movements it has had no control. It reveals to us a fact which is intensified as the ages roll—the interpenetration of human membership, the dependence of my lot on the act of a stranger. Our interest in the narrative is a twentieth-century interest. We feel that when we disengage ourselves from the old circumstances, when we carry the portrait from the land of Israel into the streets of London, we have in no sense diminished the living force of the picture. We are made one with the ancient world by the experience of a common suffering.

The life of Mephibosheth opens amid the storm and stress of Israel. His father Jonathan, the friend of David, has gone forth to fight against the Philistines. With him has gone forth the flower of the nation's fighting men. They are gathered on the field of Gilboa. Saul is there; his sons are there; his great commanders are there. It is an assemblage of the manly beauty and virile strength of Israel. Little Mephibosheth is left at home in the care of a nurse. He is but five years old—a child probably of vigorous limb and healthy sinew, giving promise of great deeds to come. He is amusing himself in his father's grounds on the day after the battle—under the guardianship of his female attendant. Suddenly there is heard the beating of hoofs on the outer road. In breathless haste a horseman rides into the avenue. He calls to the nurse, 'Take the child, and fly; the Philistines are upon you; Saul and Jonathan are dead, and Israel is undone!' Frantic with terror, the nurse catches up the child, and in wild haste makes for the road. But haste is a bad guardian. The woman's arms are enfeebled by tremor. She is paralysed with fear—fear more for herself than for her charge. At each sound, real or imaginary, the

heart dies within her. At last, in one dread moment of paroxysm, her arms relax their hold and their little burden falls.

When the child is lifted from the ground he is a helpless cripple; he has lost the power of both feet, and lost it irretrievably. In any age such a calamity would be dreadful; in that age it was social extinction. His fall had the effect of Adam's fall; it shut the gates of an earthly paradise. All his prospects were shattered in a moment. He could neither henceforth have the tree of knowledge nor the tree of life—neither the priesthood nor the kingdom. The priest had to be unblemished, free from physical stain; the king had to be unmutilated, sound in bone and sinew. Alike for peace or war, this future man would be disqualified. No soldier who lay dead that day on the field of Gilboa presents to my mind so sad a spectacle as does the mangled body of that living child picked up on the road from Jezreel.

Who picked him up I do not know. Whether the woman arrested her flight to lift the fallen burden, or whether the hand of a stranger found and fed the blighted and fatherless child, I cannot tell. I will follow the example set me by the sacred narrative; I will draw a veil

over the immediately succeeding years. When next the scene opens, Mephibosheth is a man. He is the last remaining of his once wide family circle. The dynasty of Saul has passed away, and David reigns where Jonathan, had he lived, would have been. Not only has Mephibosheth lost kindred and kingdom; he has lost his private property—that piece of land which belonged to his grandfather Saul and should have descended to his father Jonathan. He is in the position of a physically helpless pauper; he is without money and he is without means of making it. He has become dependent upon human charity. He has contracted the habits of a dependant. His mind crouches like his body. He is servile, obsequious, nervously anxious to please. All the pride which dwelt in the house of Saul has been extinguished in him. One could hardly believe that this was the grandson of a man of fire, the son of a man of fearlessness. The calamity of the body has paralysed the movement of the mind.

Where is he living—this hapless youth? In a place called Lo-debar on the east of Jordan, in the house of one Machir-ben-Ammiel. Nobody can identify the place, nobody can identify the man. They are both obscure; they have

faded from history. Yet I think if we could figure a recording angel writing the annals of the human race, the place would be very prominent on the map and the man very prominent in the story. This is one of the scenes which Paul would say was 'hid with Christ in God'; you must read between the lines to see it. But when you do read between the lines you see a very grand moral spectacle. Is it not as clear as day that this obscure man has been a pearl of great price. He has performed the office of a hospital nurse for one of those cases which were not admitted to ancient hospitals. He has become the guardian, the protector, the nourisher of a deformed boy—of an incurable burden on society—without friends, without means, without influence, without talents. He has taken into his house one who, according to the laws of physical evolution, ought not to live—one unfit for the race of life, and therefore deserving to die. Without hope of recompense, without prospect of reward, stimulated only by the impulse of human pity and swayed merely by the dictates of the heart, this man has done an act beyond the compass of his time and earned his right to figure in the annals of eternity.

But there is coming to the invalid a far more august patron. David now sits upon the throne of a united Israel. He has conquered the old dynasty—Saul's dynasty. But the *memory* of the old dynasty conquers *him*. In the hour of his completed triumph there comes over him a thought of the dead past, which prostrates him at the grave of his vanquished rival; he remembers Jonathan. Had Jonathan been alive, I believe David would never have accepted the crown. And even now when he is dead, Jonathan remains a potent power. David looks round upon the wreck and cries, 'Is there any plank left of the old ship which my friend held dear? if so, I will cherish it for ever and ever!' They bring him that tiny and shattered spar—Mephibosheth; and the heart of the king runs over. This is all that is left of his friend Jonathan — this blasted, withered branch of a once gigantic tree! David says, 'I will provide for this man; I will make him glad; I will in his case disprove the doctrine that the physically unfavoured are the socially ostracised.' He bids the wondering courtiers bring forth for him the fairest robe. Henceforth this man shall sit at the royal table, be an inmate of the royal household. He shall be

adopted into the family of David; his shall be no servant's place. Nor shall he be allowed to feel that his elevation comes from favour. He shall get back his hereditary rights. His private property shall be restored—the lands of Saul, the lands of Jonathan. All occasion shall be excluded for a sneer at his dependence. He shall be associated with his own vine and figtree, with his own house and lawn. Men shall be taught to think of him, nay, he shall be taught to think of himself, not as one protected through pity but as one fêted through friendship.

You will see that this is a very high charity on the part of David. It is a charity that seeks to obliterate the traces of itself by magnifying the worth of its object. The finest thing to my mind about David's act is not its physical but its moral bearing. It is not its charity to decrepitude; it is the imprimatur it puts on decrepitude itself. When a bodily defect is associated with high places it loses its stigma; it may even become the fashion. When David set Mephibosheth at his own table he did more than confer benefit on a man physically afflicted; he crowned the physical affliction. He took up the deformity to the Mount and transfigured

it. He associated the broken box with fragrance. He appended a new significance to a very old fact. He made it possible for the Book of *Job* to be written—possible for a man to be dilapidated by the strokes of fortune, broken by the winds of adversity, bent by the burdens of the world, and yet recognised as a great man, a good man, a man under the favour of heaven.

There is one thing which may seem to impair the charity of David's act. It was not originally stimulated by the pity for Mephibosheth, but by the discovery of his relationship to one whom David loved. It was, in the first instance, a vicarious deed—a benefit bestowed, not for the sake of the afflicted man, but for the sake of the man's connection with a noble stock. But if you look deeper you will find that this is the essence of all charity. I have no hesitation in saying that in its most developed form charity is partly a vicarious act—an act which looks beyond the immediate state of the sufferer. Man's benevolence to man is greatly influenced by the fact that he *is* man—that he belongs to a kindred of the same blood with himself. Do you doubt this? Ask, then, why it is that we are more prone, or have been

in the past more prone, to overlook cruelty to the animal than to overlook cruelty to the man. It is because we have been brought up to believe that the animal is of a different species; the individual has suffered through our depreciation of the race. But when we look at the injury to an individual man, there rises immediately within us a race instinct, a protest of human brotherhood. Why is it that an act of charity to an individual man is called a humanitarian act; why say that my deed to one is a deed to the whole race? Simply because when I succour the individual I have the race in my mind. I am remembering my brotherhood to humanity and the glory of that brotherhood. I am remembering that this injured man is the member of a great family —a family which has bequeathed him a birthright of high expectations, and from whose ancestral lineage he is entitled to hope for better things than he has received. I am remembering the powerful branches of the same stem—the Sauls and Jonathans who 'were swifter than eagles.' My compassion is prompted by my sense of contrast—my sense of what *ought* to be.

Accordingly, when Mephibosheth is before

me, what I see is not the poor maimed creature; it is the man as he *might* have been. If I thought his present condition was that of normal humanity, it would never occur to me to pity him. I do not pity a worm; I acknowledge it as after its kind one of the works of a beneficent Nature. I cannot deplore what is natural, what is the law of a creature's being. It is where I see a creature different from its kind that I utter my protest. When Mephibosheth woke the pity of David it was because David saw standing at the side of the broken man another Mephibosheth who was *not* broken—an ideal Mephibosheth—a Mephibosheth that *should* have been. He saw him, not as he was, but as he would have appeared in other circumstances—a stalwart, vigorous growth, with all the blood of Saul in him, with all the blood of Jonathan in him, with all the blood of Israel in him. It was the sight of the legitimate man, the normal man, the man who *ought* to have been, that made David sad, that stirred his heart to pity and nerved his hand to help.

This vicarious element is the root of Christian benevolence. It dictates all forms of helpfulness. It is my vision of the ideal man, it is

my sight of the man who in other circumstances would have occupied the place of the deformed, that constitutes at once the ground and the strength of my Christian charity. Nor is this principle limited to cases of physical privation. It finds its deepest root in the moral sphere. How often you and I are called to experience the fact that the quickening of the soul awaits the resurrection of the body! We see men and women every day whose spiritual nature has been warped by their physical environment. They are like a man with a musical soul and a musical ear and a musical message, but whose flute has a little crack in it. That little crack makes all the difference between him and the great minstrel; it arrests the birth of his melody. So is it in the music of morals. There are lives that seem a mass of inconsistency. They have moments of high aspiration, flashes of noble sentiment, depths of serious thought; yet the outcome of their being is not musical—they are among the discordant notes of the choir. Why is this? It is because the instrument by which they play has a crack in it. These men and women are waiting the resurrection of the body; *that* will put them all right. The loosening of a nerve, the

tightening of a sinew, the strengthening of one of the lobes in the brain, the quickening of one of the pulses in the heart, might in a moment transform a moral sluggard into a Howard and change a frivolous life into a Florence Nightingale.

Now, what should be the Christian attitude toward such lives? It must be an attitude of hope. We must look at these men and women, not as they are, but as in other circumstances they would have been. We must impute to them *already* the resurrection of the body. Mephibosheth makes but poor music; but Mephibosheth is deficient in many stops of the organ. How grandly Mephibosheth would have played if these stops had not been deficient! Shall we not attribute to him the missing stops! Shall we not hear in his music the notes that are not there—the notes that one day *may* be there! Shall we not grant him a wreath which he has not won—the wreath he would have worn had his equipment been complete! On what principle can I bring forth the fairest robe for the prodigal? On what principle can I put a ring on the hand that has hitherto wrought nothing but evil, and sandals for the feet that have trodden only in the mire? On

the principle that the real man is as yet behind the scene, has had no chance of showing himself. We refuse to believe that this organ with defective stops and broken keys is the normal instrument. Behind the defective stops, beneath the broken keys, we see, nay, we hear, another organ—of full equipment and of perfect tone. We hear, and we say, 'This is the true Mephibosheth, the real Mephibosheth.' We give the broken instrument a place in the king's house, not for what it is, but for what it represents. We place it where we shall see and hear that other form and that other voice which it was designed to reveal, and whose message in better circumstances it may yet unfold.

IMPUTE to me, O Lord, the righteousness of Christ—the righteousness of the highest! Impute to me the music of the perfect organ, of the instrument with ten strings! I await, like Mephibosheth, the redemption of the body; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. I have no adequate notes to express the music that is in my soul. The song in my heart is better than the song on my lips. I have aspir-

ings after a melody which I cannot produce. There are chords within which have never been struck without. There are harmonies in my inner ear which my voice cannot tell, which my hand cannot play. Impute to me these wordless songs, O Lord!—I shall sing them when the redemption of the body comes. Judge me not by my *spoken* melodies! Measure me not by my *uttered* harmonies! Estimate me not by the strains which my *brother-man* has heard! Let Thine ear be open to my *inner* voice! Listen to my thoughts unspoken! Receive my prayers unsaid! Accept my sacrifices unoffered! Record my deeds unfinished! Attribute to me the life that is yet but in the germ! Behold the flower in my bud, the oak in my acorn, the fruit in my buried grain! Behold the day in my dawn, the summer in my spring, the fulness of my year in the faintness of my yearning! My streams shall make glad Thy city when they are seen in the light of the river that is to be.

CHAPTER VI

JONAH THE NARROW

THERE is no book of the Bible which to my mind has suffered such undue disparagement as the Book of Jonah. It is popularly treated as the butt of literature. It is regarded as the product of a very superficial intellect—a writing which has crept into the Canon unaccountably, and whose presence there should be held to be a mistake. I hold, on the other hand, that the Book of Jonah is second to no part of the Old Testament in originality of thought and breadth of conception. I hold that, so far from being the production of a superficial intellect, it is the work of a mind greatly in advance of its own time, and abreast of the highest religious culture in ours. I look upon the Book of Jonah as the counterpart of the Book of Job. Job is the study of a moral problem; Jonah is the delineation of an intellectual difficulty. Both are designed to indicate an enlarged sense of the presence of

God. Job battles against the doctrine that *pain* is a banishment from God; Jonah refutes the belief that space is a banishment from God. Job selects a suffering individual and shows that he had the Divine spirit; Jonah selects a foreign heathen city and shows that it had the Divine care. Job says, 'If I make my bed in hell, Thou art there'; Jonah cries, 'If I flee unto the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand find me.'

Let me pass from the Book of Jonah to the figure it delineates. I have often imagined an exercise proposed to the pupils of a Sunday-school to this effect: 'Write the life of Jonah in modern terms.' I think the responses to that demand would run very much in the same groove. Something like the following, it seems to me, would typify the view of the scholars: —'There once was a very loose-living youth, who cared little about religion and spent his time in idle pleasures. This was a great grief to his parents, who had all along wanted to bring him up for the Church. In the hope that years might lend him wisdom, they tried to force him to study for the ministry. But this youth had a passion for another kind of life; he wanted to go to sea. He dreamed with rap-

ture of the blue waves of the Mediterranean, and longed to be tosssd upon its bosom. At last the importunity of his parents became so irksome and the attraction of the sea became so great, that he fled from home. He went down to the harbour and attached himself to a ship about to sail for the coast of Spain. He thought he would there be free from all moral lessons, all grave lectures, all individual restraints. But he found that in the attempt to get away he had run into the lion's den. He had come to a life which sobered him more effectually than all the lectures of his father and mother. His proud spirit was subdued; his recklessness was cured. He had been sick of home; he now became home-sick. He longed for even the dull Sabbaths and the tedious sermons. He repented of his bad life; he resolved to make amends. He said, As a punishment for my wicked conduct I will do what my parents desire; I see that their will was God's call; I will obey the call; I will become a minister.'

Such, I think, would be the typical essay of the Sunday-school child; and I doubt not that many of its elders would say, 'Well done!' Now, we all know that there is such a youth

as the one here described; the boy who runs off to sea is a very familiar object in modern life, and the result of his nautical experience is almost invariably the same as is here portrayed. But Jonah is not that boy. He is not a boy at all; already, at the opening of the scene, he is a mature man—a man of position, a man of reputation. Far from being averse to the ministry, he is already a great preacher. He is chaplain to Jeroboam the Second—the greatest sovereign who, since the days of Solomon, had filled a Jewish throne. In that monarch's brilliant court Jonah ben-Amittai lives and labours ere ever has opened the story of the book that bears his name. We gather from 2 Kings xiv. 25, that he was the foreteller of the royal triumphs and the inspirer of the royal counsels. This is not the picture of a youth who became nautical to continue the privilege of being naughty. The truth is, if you accept the view of my hypothetical scholar, you are on a track leading in the opposite direction to the right one. Jonah is in want of discipline; but it is precisely for the contrary reason to that supposed. He needs it, not to narrow him, but to widen him—not to sober him down, but to give him wings. He is

not the wild spirit of youth requiring to be contracted; he is the contracted nature requiring the spirit of youth. He must be made more intellectually daring, more sympathetically venturesome, more emotionally expanded. The danger from which he has to fly is not the danger of a fast life, but of a slow life; he awaits the opening of the prison door.

Jonah was brought up in the most narrow period of Jewish orthodoxy—the time when Israel believed in the limitation of Divine sympathy to her own work and her own borders. She looked upon herself as the only child of the human family on whom the eye of the Father could complacently gaze. It was for her the earth was allowed to bloom. It was for her the natural mercies of God were still continued. It was for her the thunders of Divine judgment were prevented from falling. She believed herself to be the salt of the earth—that which kept the earth alive. All heathen lands were outside the sympathy of the Eternal. They moved in a circle of their own—a circle which had no point of contact with the plan of the world. The kingdom of God was a Jewish kingdom. The providence of God was a Jewish providence. The tri-

umph of God was a Jewish triumph. Into this faith Jonah was born, in this faith he grew. He was reared in the belief of the *tribal* sympathy of God. He reached manhood in the persuasion that the salvation of the world meant the salvation of Israel, and that the climax of Divine grace would be attained in the glory of the Jewish nation.

But all at once something happened to Jonah. It is described at the opening of the Book as a coming to him of the word of the Lord. You must not imagine it was an outside catastrophe. You must not think it came in handwriting on the wall or sounded with audible accents from the sky. When we think of it thus we miss the real feature of the portrait of Jonah; we rob him of his credit. The Divine voice that came to Jonah was a voice within him, an aspiration. He may have connected his first hearing of it with something physical—I cannot tell. But the voice itself was within; it was a part of the man, a thought in the man. And it was a thought unlike all his previous thoughts—new, startling, disturbing. It set him at variance with *himself*. It came to him in a form something like this: 'Are there no cities of the world which

are great in the sight of God except Jerusalem and Samaria! Is it conceivable that the metropolis of the mighty Assyrian Empire is disregarded by the eye of heaven! Is not that metropolis—that city of Nineveh—the home of human hearts which are beating with all the impulses common to the life of man! Are not the chords of these hearts swept by the same winds that sweep the strings of the hearts of Israel! Are the chords of Nineveh to have no minstrel on earth and no listening ear in heaven! Can no human hand be found that shall weave these notes into harmony—a harmony that God Himself will hear! Why should not *yours* be that hand! You are a prophet to the court of Jeroboam; why should you not be a prophet to the court of Nineveh! Are you only to preach to those who need no conversion! Are there to be no *foreign* missions—no messages of God to those who specially require them! Do you not hear a voice calling you to quit your native land, to claim fresh lands for God!'

That was the call that sounded in the ear of Jonah, and it came to the inner ear of Jonah. It came as a movement of his heart—as a missionary impulse. It was the dim dawning of

that message which was hereafter to be written in golden light, 'Other sheep I have which are not of this fold.' But though it spoke to Jonah's inner ear, it did not yet speak to the whole man. It was a voice to but one side of his nature—the higher side. There was a lower side of his nature to which there spoke another voice—the voice of expediency. For remember, this new thought of Jonah was, to the age in which he lived, a social heresy. It was something which, if revealed, would ostracise him. It would shake his prophetic glory, it would destroy his ministerial influence. Was he prepared to speak aloud the word which had been spoken within? Two forces strove in his heart—the old world and the new. On one side was the favour of God; on the other was the respect of man. On the one was enlarged sympathy; on the other was ancient custom. On the one was the breath of poetry; on the other was the warning touch of prudence. On the one was a vision of the future; on the other was a memory of the past. It was a choice which, on either side, involved a sacrifice.

Was there any way of avoiding both alternatives? Yes. A mode of escape was suggested to him, not by the spirit of atheism, but by

the very orthodoxy of his original creed. Might not he cease to hear the Divine voice by a simple act of flight. He had been trained in the belief that the God of Israel never let His voice be heard amid objects entirely foreign—that even the pious Jew, when he sojourned in distant lands, had to carry with him some relic of his own country which would serve as a talisman of Divine communion. Had not Naaman the Syrian when he embraced the faith of Israel been obliged, ere departing from Damascus, to carry with him a heap of Jewish earth whereon to build the altar to his future God![1] Jonah remembers the incident, and it suggests to him an open door. Might not he fly from his country *without* transporting the heap of earth! Might he not avoid both the voice of conscience and the voice of contumely by a flight from his native land which would be also a flight from the Divine Presence! If he could leave every relic of Israel behind him, if he could get away into some region where the Jew had left no track, if he could sojourn in a land where he would find no fellow-countryman, meet no transplanted product and hear no borrowed song,

[1] 2 Kings v. 17.

would not the troublesome voice then be still! Would he not thenceforth interpose a wall between himself and that haunting Presence whose accents were at once so convincing and so dreadful!

But where, asks Jonah, is this region to be found? Where can he find a land in which there dwells not a reminder of *his* land—a world absolutely divorced from every Jewish association? He looks round on all the nations of the earth to find a spot which the influence of Israel has not touched. He looks in vain. In every land to which his eye turns he sees some footprint of the steps of Judaism; he feels that the presence of God will *find* him there. Suddenly a thought strikes him. There is a spot he has not yet considered. He has reconnoitred all the *land;* but is there not an element besides the land—the sea! Is not the sea a track where Judaism has seldom journeyed! Has it not been an element hateful to the son of Israel—a path which, since the days of Moses, his countrymen have traversed with trembling! Surely *here* there will be no sacramental symbol to wake communion with God! If he can only get out upon the deep, he feels that he will be free from this

haunting Divine Presence—this perpetual missionary call which, like the moaning of the wind, will not let him sleep. He will throw himself upon the bosom of this dreaded sea. The very thing which makes it dreaded by his countrymen will make it desired by him—the sense which it gives of the absence of God.

So Jonah goes down to Joppa and embarks in a ship bound for the land which is now called Spain. I do not think he had any wish to go to Spain. He wanted a sea voyage, and he chose the ship bound for the extreme west as likely to afford him the longest journey—the journey, also, towards the point most remote from Nineveh. He is seeking to drown a voice by the inpouring of new associations—associations which have always suggested something foreign and unfamiliar. He has launched himself into another world. Everything about it is un-Jewish. The sea is un-Jewish; the ship is un-Jewish; the crew is un-Jewish; the objects worshipped by the crew are un-Jewish. Surely here he will escape the haunting conscience—the disconcerting message from the God of Israel!

And now something happens—something

which is commonly called Jonah's punishment, but which I would rather call Jonah's revelation. Jonah's revelation comes through the sea—through the very element which he expected to obstruct revelation. It is the sea, and not the whale, that is the real saviour of Jonah. A storm darkens the face of the deep. All the winds of heaven break forth upon this ship bound for Spain; all the waves of the Mediterranean aspire to sweep over her. That storm is Jonah's deliverance—his deliverance from delusion. It brings him a message—the very message he needs. Its voice is to him the voice of God. It says: 'Jonah, you have been trying to escape from Me. You have been thinking that Mine is a *limited* presence. You have thrown yourself on the bosom of the deep to avoid lying on *My* bosom. And on the bosom of the deep you have found Me. I have been here before you—waiting for you, expecting you. I have interrupted your journey, your flight from duty, your effort to evade My call. I have a way even through the sea, a path even through the deep; whither shall you flee from My presence!'

I have said that this voice of the storm is the real rescue of Jonah; it rescued his soul, his

manhood. Long before his salvation from the outward shipwreck, he is saved from the shipwreck of his inner life. The storm made a man of him, a missionary of him. His missionary spirit took fire on the spot. Are these heathen sailors to die on *his* account! Is not he the aggressor, the delinquent! Is it not for him that the storm has been sent! Is it not he that has brought discredit on this foreign ship; is it not he that should atone! He calls upon the sailors to throw him into the sea—to purchase their peace by his sacrifice. That call is the finest thing in the picture. It is the real miracle. It marks the enlargement of the man. It implies a transformation akin to that of Saul of Tarsus. The greatest prodigy is not Jonah's escape from the waves, but Jonah's immersion in the waves—his immersion at his own desire. He could only ask to be thrown into that element of death by reason of the fact that he had already entered into an element of larger life—an environment in which his Jewish nature had recognised the common need of man.

Here, so far as the moralist is concerned, closes the first scene in the life of Jonah. When the second scene opens we are in a new

atmosphere. Jonah has been physically rescued from the storm and he has been spiritually rescued *by* the storm. He has reached a definite conviction—that the Spirit of God is brooding over the face of the heathen waters. He has arrived at the conclusion that his pity for Nineveh is God's pity for Nineveh —God's imperative mandate to his soul to give that city the words of eternal life. He has obeyed that mandate. He has gone down to Nineveh. He has stood in her streets and proclaimed her danger. He has called on her to repent and flee from the wrath to come. But a question remains. What does Jonah *understand* by Nineveh's repentance? Does he mean that if the city experiences the natural remorse of conscience and resolves to lead for the future a better life, she will receive the mercy of God? No; Jonah is not broad enough for *that*. He has only learned half of the truth. He has learned that God desires the salvation of the heathen city from an impending doom. But will God avert the doom of that city while it *remains* heathen? Jonah says, no. To him the escape of Nineveh must be made via Jerusalem, via Samaria, via some part of Israel. If the heathen city would be saved, it

must become a Jewish city. It must kneel as a suppliant at the altar of Jonah's people. It must keep the Sabbath. It must be circumcised, or, at the least, must become 'a proselyte of the gate.' Will God accept mere natural religion! Will He be content to receive as an offering the fruits of a heathen soil! Will He consent to pardon Nineveh, not for the sake of Moses, but for her own sake—not because she has accepted the laws of Sinai, but because she has heard the voice of the secular conscience!

Let me put Jonah's difficulty clearly. His message has been, 'Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!' It has been entirely effective. The city has been stirred to its depths. Panic has seized all classes, from the king to the beggar. A fast has been proclaimed in the hope of obviating the wrath of Heaven, and by a royal decree all ranks of society are commanded to conform to it. Now, remember what this fast was. It was a purely Assyrian ceremony. It did not take the form which a fast would have taken in Israel. It took a heathen form, a Gentile form, a thoroughly grotesque form. The rules given were such as betokened a benighted condition. Will God *accept* this foreign sacrament? asks

Jonah. Will He extend pardon to men who seek it through a heathen ceremony? 'Surely not!' he answers; the very thought makes him angry. He wants the city to be saved, but saved by legitimate means—means consistent with Jewish patriotism. If the Ninevites want to fast, let them come up to his wilderness and fast; if they want to pray, let them come up to his temple and pray; thus and not otherwise may they hope for the mercy of God.

But the forty days pass, and the destruction comes not. A wave of Jewish reaction sweeps over Jonah. He has been liberal up to a certain point—liberal beyond his age. But he finds here an arrest to his opening liberality. It offends him as a patriot that a Ninevite, as a Ninevite, should win the heart of God. There is required for Jonah a second rescue from his own narrowness. The first stage of his deliverance had been secured by the storm. From that storm he had come forth enlarged, but not perfected. There is still a dividing wall between him and freedom. Who shall break it down? Who shall usher him into the open? Who shall bring him into the presence of a God without fences, without barriers, without limits? Who shall reveal to him the

truth that Divine love can travel by its own wings and reach a heathen city without the aid of Jewish chariots?

That revelation comes to Jonah in a most extraordinary way—extraordinary in its simplicity. The first revelation had been remarkable in its pageantry. It had come in the rolling of the waves, in the shrieking of the winds, in the darkening of the skies. But this second revelation is to enter by a silent door—a door whose opening none will hear. It is to reach the heart of Jonah by a commonplace avenue —an avenue which has been for years but an ordinary carriage-drive. With no moaning of the sea, no shaking of the trees, no flying of the birds, is it to come. It is to manifest its presence in an incident too trifling to be historical, in an experience too minute to be recorded by human annals. We make a transition from the roaring ocean to the restful arbour. We pass from the Mediterranean into the meadow. We exchange the sublime for the simple. We follow the prophet of God from the scene where man feels his insignificance to the scene where man realises his superiority—from the heaving of the great deep to the waving of the autumn field.

Jonah has gone to sit in that field. He is in discontented mood—inclined to murmur against the order of things. The day is sultry; the sunbeams smite the grass like shafts of fire. The prophet is oppressed with the heat; he feels weary and jaded. Suddenly he remembers a delightful little arbour which had sheltered him yesterday—a resting-place in the field, overshadowed by a gourd or shrub of wide-spreading leaves. He will go to that cooling shade, he will recline under that protective foliage; it will be to him as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. He repairs to the spot where used to spread the healing plant. The spot is there, the seat is there; but the plant is gone; it has faded in the past night. Jonah's rage bursts forth; this is the last straw, and it breaks his last thread of patience. He pours out the vials of his wrath over this vacant spot of the universe—this little bit of ground despoiled of a plant which had been its tenant for a day.

All at once another voice spoke within Jonah—a voice very like that which he had heard in the Court of Jeroboam. It said: 'Jonah, are you not at this moment refuting the grounds for your own discontent! Is not

your very anger an argument against yourself! You have taken an interest in a most insignificant thing—a thing which you admit to be unfit for your companionship; why should not the Almighty have the same interest in *Nineveh!* Nineveh cannot reach up to *Him* any more than the gourd can reach up to *you;* but you can come down to the gourd; you can give your presence and your interest to the insignificant plant. Are you to have a power that the Almighty has not—the power of going down! You accepted the service of a plant which was a plant of Nineveh. You did not insist on first bearing it to Jerusalem, to Samaria, to some part of Israel. You sat down yesterday beneath its foliage in this very spot; its shade was as precious to you as if it had been a Jewish shade. And shall not *God* accept the service of Nineveh! Though its fast be a heathen fast, though its cry be a cry of nature, though its repentance be the repentance of the natural conscience, though its voice be the voice, not of the man in the temple, but of the man in the street, shall not God accept its service! By the very anger of your soul you have justified the ways of heaven.'

From that hour in the fields of Nineveh

Jonah returned, a changed man. The voice that spoke *to* him was the voice that spoke *in* him. He never could have heard it if the door of his heart had not been already open. For the second time God had revealed to him that he could not flee from His presence. For the second time he had found that Presence in an unlikely spot. He had already found it in the solitudes of the great deep, where one would have thought it unnecessary; and he had now discovered it in the midst of a heathen city, in the observance of a heathen ritual, in the conscience of a heathen community. In the silent thoughts of one human soul there had struck another hour in the progress of life's day; and in the heart of an individual man humanity had taken its first step into a field of wider development.

REVEAL to me, O Father, the breadth of Thy Divine presence! I *too* am prone to narrow Thee. I have refused to see Thy presence in Nineveh. I have been quite willing that Nineveh should come to my Jerusalem, to my temple, to my altar; I have always offered her an open door into the house where I worship.

But I have never dreamed that Nineveh can get a blessing within her own temple. I have never dreamed that a fast in a heathen city may be a fast of real communion. I have never dreamed that an altar built to other names than Thine can have a step leading to the sky. Teach me that truth, O Lord! Teach me that Thou claimest all prayers as prayers to *Thee!* I see the men of Nineveh adoring inferior things, and I cry, 'These are idolaters!' but *Thou* sayest, 'Inasmuch as they did it unto the least, they have done it unto Me.' Often have I thought of these words of Thine, 'Shall I not spare Nineveh, in which are more than six score thousand infants and much cattle!' I think I understand their meaning. It is that even the unspoken cry of the infant, even the inarticulate cry of the cattle, has to Thee the import of a prayer. O Love, Divine Love, imputing to me, to Nineveh, to all things, more than the voice can ask or the thought express, let us magnify Thy name together! Thou answerest, not our words but our needs; unite us by our needs! Unite us under the withered gourd, the common want, the kindred pain! Whether our fast be at Jerusalem or at Nineveh, it is the same want and the same cry;

let us feel it to be the same worship too! Send us the Day of Pentecost once more! We have many tongues in the flesh; let us speak one language in the spirit. We have many creeds in the mind; let us recognise a common craving in the heart! We fix our trembling gaze each on a different star; tell us that through them all we see one golden light!

CHAPTER VII

HEZEKIAH THE DEVOUT

In these studies I feel myself in the position of a man seeking appropriate inscriptions for tombstones. I want in each case to find an epitaph which will concentrate into a single expression the whole character of the portrait —which will indicate, not a phase of the life, not an incident of the life, not an abnormal feature of the life, but a summing up of the life itself from its dawn to its setting. What shall be my inscription on the portrait of Hezekiah? He is one of the best-known figures in the Gallery; but that does not make it more easy to write his inscription—rather the reverse. We do not analyse that with which we are most familiar. Hezekiah is one of the Jewish heroes. There is no picture in the Gallery on which his countrymen have so prolonged their gaze. He shines out as the second David, as the nearest approach to the glory of the nation's age of gold. And yet all this is an illu-

sion. When we scrutinise the picture, the impression is not sustained. There is no real analogy between Hezekiah and David. In one sense, there is a contrast. David is a natural genius illuminated by grace; Hezekiah is a commonplace mind illuminated by grace. David is inherent beauty rendered more attractive by dress; Hezekiah is inherent plainness to which dress imparts a beauty. David is a rich nature intensified; Hezekiah is a meagre nature enriched.

What, then, shall be our inscription on the life of this king? Shall we call him great? No; he did not really arrest the decadence of his country. Shall we call him brave? No; we shall see that, naturally, he was deficient in courage. Shall we call him wise? No; we shall find that, in his own strength, he exhibited a shallow policy. But it is quite a common thing to see a soul transformed by the advent of a great love into qualities the opposite of its own. Love makes the timid brave, love makes the foolish wise. So was it with Hezekiah. There came to him at a certain moment of his life the sense of a great love. I know not when it broke upon him; judging from the concluding verse of 2 Chron. xxix.,

I should say its influence was sudden—dating from the solemn hour of his coronation. What was this mighty love which entered the soul of Hezekiah? It was no earthly passion, no sensuous attachment, no worldly preoccupation of the heart. It was that form of love which is found in saints and martyrs—the love of God. Yet upon the man it had the same effect as any earthly passion—it transformed him, metamorphosed him, made a new creature of him. It gave firmness to a vacillating nature; it lent energy to a weak will; it inspired boldness in a naturally shrinking spirit. Hezekiah is, in truth, a type of the man under the influence of a religious revival. He represents the commonplace mind possessed by a new emotion. He stands as the symbol of that exaltation which may come to a very ordinary life when fired by Divine enthusiasm. He typifies that empire over which he rules—an empire humanly insignificant, slenderly endowed, meagrely furnished, inadequately equipped for a struggle with surrounding forces, yet rearing a proud head and presenting a brave front, through the promises and the potencies of a unique religious faith.

Hezekiah, then, is essentially the devout man—the man of God; this is his distinctive characteristic; apart from this he is nothing. As I study his portrait in the Great Gallery, four successive scenes rise into view. I will call them metaphorically the four hours in Hezekiah's day—the hour in the street, the hour on the sea, the hour in the vale, and the hour on the hill. Each reveals a separate aspect of the religious life—an aspect as familiar to modern England as it was to the heart of ancient Israel. Let us consider these four manifestations of the Divine life as exhibited in the experience of Hezekiah.

The first scene opens in the street—amid the surging of the crowd. Hezekiah is seen gazing on that crowd. He is twenty-five years old; he has been called to the throne by the death of his father Ahaz. And suddenly it occurs to him that by the fact of his kinghood he stands to that multitude in a new relation. It seems to him that he has become this morning the man responsible for the sins of the people, the man on whose shoulders must fall the burden of all the evil they may do. He feels himself lifted to a high moral altitude—a height which makes him dizzy with its ter-

rible suggestions of a fall. In the eyes of the young king the fall, so far as the multitude are concerned, is already an accomplished fact. He sees a city wholly given to idolatry—the idolising of pleasures which are not pure. He sees that the life of his father has been the cause of this badness, that the crowd have taken their morals from the crown. He sees that the crown must give back to the people that virtue of which it has despoiled them, that it has fallen to him to make atonement for his father's sins. He feels that the attractions to an irreligious life must be suppressed at all hazards and by the most drastic means. The people must be drawn from the worship of the world to the worship of God, and they must be drawn by the shutting of the world's gates. Let their pleasures be prohibited! Let their carnal haunts be closed! Let their gaming-tables be broken! Let their drinking orgies be forbidden! Let their luxury in dress be restrained and their extravagant expenditure moderated! Put out the world's street-lamps and leave its votaries in the dark; then, perhaps, will they seek the kingdom of God!

Such is Hezekiah's thought; and it is conceived in the spirit of a revivalist. But that

is only one half of his thought. Hezekiah sees something beyond this—something which the ordinary revivalist does not always see. He perceives that it is not enough to debar from worldly attractions; there must be created unworldly attractions. He feels that the people will never be drawn into the temple of God by the mere destruction of their heathen images; the temple itself must be beautified. Why had men resorted to unhallowed shrines? Was it not because the temple of the true God was in a condition unworthy of itself, unworthy of Him! Had they not been driven to seek beauty among the heathen because there was no beauty among the faithful! Why should the temple of Jerusalem not be made as attractive as the groves of Ashtaroth? Was loveliness a monopoly of the wicked! Was aestheticism a prerogative of the sinner! Were the charms of secular art in the exclusive possession of the ungodly! Had the Divine Spirit *alone* nothing to draw with, nothing by which to attract the world! It was easy to turn out the lamps in the street; but that was merely to create inability to do mischief. What was wanted was ability to do good. To get that, there must not only be an extinction of the

street lamps but a lighting of the lamps of the temple. The temple had been too long dark. Worship had been too long gloomy. Religion had been too long a symbol of sombreness. If the courts of the Lord were to become the haunts of fashion, it was *God* that must say to the world 'Let there be light!'

Such is the thought of Hezekiah. I am deeply struck with the prominence it receives in a document which is commonly considered the most prosaic writing in the Bible—the Book of Chronicles. Nothing could be more artistic than the statement of that book. With fine discrimination it declares emphatically that reconstruction preceded destruction—that before one heathen image was broken, before one idolatrous grove was cut down, before one worldly pleasure was suppressed, the temple of God was made bright and beautiful. The positive came before the negative; the new was provided ere the old was prohibited. It must ever be so in every work of reform. Paul expresses the idea very finely when he says, 'Walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.' It is as if he had said: 'It is no use trying to cure bad passions by Act of Parliament; it is vain to attempt the in-

auguration of virtue by the tying of the hands. If you want men to avoid walking in the counsel of the ungodly, you must place their delight in the Law of the Lord. The flesh cannot be conquered by legal enactment, cannot be subdued by privation, cannot be debarred by shutting the door. The entrance of the new must precede the expulsion of the old; the breath of spring must come while winter fills the air.' And truly Paul is right. The passions of the evil heart can be removed by killing them; but if you *begin* with that, you pluck up wheat and tares together; you keep the heart from acting wickedly by forbidding it to act at all. Your remedy for bad passion must not be passionlessness; it must be the Lord's Passion—the breath of pure love. Vice can only be cured on the homeopathic principle. If you remove the old wine you must provide new wine; and the new wine should be put into bottles not dissimilar in form to those which held the old. If Hezekiah would abolish the groves of Ashtaroth, he must first adorn the temple of Jerusalem.

So closes Hezekiah's first hour—the hour in the street. When next he appears before us, the scene is changed. If his morning hour is in the

street, his forenoon hour is, metaphorically, on the sea. There has come a storm. The ship of the Jewish State is lashed with foam and her timbers are creaking. That storm is Sennacherib. Sennacherib is coming with all the hosts of Assyria—Sennacherib the impious, the terrible. He is coming to ravage the City of God—to destroy the dwelling-place of the Most High. Who shall withstand the day of his appearing! Already have the surrounding nations sunk before him. Even the land of Samaria has fallen—the twin sister of Judah, the twin daughter of Jacob. What will Hezekiah do? Any ancient gallery but that of the Bible would, in the interest of a national hero, have concealed what follows. Any ancient gallery but that of the Bible would have depicted its Hezekiah as coming forth to die—hopeless of the fight, yet ready for the martyr's doom. But the Bible has an artistic purpose to fulfil far beyond the flattering of national patriotism. It shows Hezekiah as he was. It represents him in the first instance as frightened, trembling, panic-struck. He flies to the temple. He gathers the silver which had been stored there. He strips the doors and the pillars of the gold with which he had beautified

them. He dismantles that house of God which he had just adorned; he despoils it of its treasures. He brings out these treasures. He sends them as a tribute to Sennacherib. He prostrates himself in vassalage. He purchases peace by the wealth meant for the Lord.

Are you surprised that I regard this exposure of Hezekiah's weakness as a stroke of art? Do you not see that, if a man is to be painted whose strength is in God alone, it must be shown that he has no natural strength. What is the problem which the Bible artist has here before him? It is the depicting of a life that shall be timid by nature and brave by grace. Could anything be better done, more artistically done? We see at the outset the man Hezekiah as nature made him—a most unheroic figure, an abject, trembling figure. We see a soul paralysed with terror in the presence of his foe, speechless and prostrate before a danger which he is powerless to avert and impotent to face. But even as we gaze upon the humiliating spectacle we feel that it is to be but the dark background of a great glory. We feel that it is meant to intensify something which the pencil is about to produce. That something is a delineation of what

can be done by the unaided grace of God. You have seen a conjurer offer to put articles into an empty box through supernatural channels. The first thing he does is to make you quite sure that the box is empty. 'Look at it!' he says, 'be certain there is nothing in it!' So is it with this artist of Divine things. He says, 'I am going to show you that God can put treasures into a vacant mind. Be quite certain at the outset that this mind *is* vacant! Look at this poor creature Hezekiah! See how empty he is, how barren he is, how useless he is! See what a poor, shivering, trembling soul he is by nature—how unable to be a man, how unfit to be a king! Truly the box is empty!'

By and by the box is shut; and, when next it is opened, a startling spectacle presents itself—the vacant space has been filled! We see nothing to account for the change. No hand has been visible at work, no process of replenishment has been observed. When last we saw the cavity, it was void; it is now entirely occupied. To drop the metaphor: In a short time after the manifestation of his abject terror, Hezekiah appears before us full of courage, radiant with hope. When last we parted with

him he was prostrate in the dust; when next we meet him he is erect with the bearing of a soldier—a soldier confident of victory. And the strange thing is that, so far as the eye can see, there is nothing to account for the change. There is no more ground for natural hope now than there was when he lay grovelling in fear. Sennacherib has not departed. The Assyrian host has not declined. The resources of Judah have not increased.[1] The material condition of things is exactly what it was—neither better nor worse. It is just the case of Simon Peter, but in inverted order. Peter looked at the raging sea—he first laughed and then began to cry; Hezekiah looked at the raging sea—he first cried and then began to laugh. But neither in Peter's case nor Hezekiah's was there any change in the *sea* to explain the change in their mind. The wind was the same, the waves were the same, the clouds were the same; there was no alteration on the face of the *deep*.

Whence, then, came this transformation of Hezekiah? From within. It was a strengthening of the mind. He had sought a place of

[1] Strictly speaking, there had been left to Judah nothing but Jerusalem and its environs.

prayer in the interval, and that place had made a man of him. He had gone in, a coward; he had come out, a hero. The whole art of the picture is made to centre in the breath of God. Hezekiah in himself is nothing; he is only strong in the presence of the Lord. The triumph of the Divine Spirit, as exhibited by this artist, does not lie in the destruction of Sennacherib's host. It lies in the transformation of Hezekiah. It lies in the fact that the breath of God can make a coward brave, a craven bold, a pessimist hopeful, a mourner joyous, a croucher kingly. That was the real victory over the power of Sennacherib!

The third scene comes. It is Hezekiah's hour in the vale. It is a distinctly different experience from the other two. These had one thing in common—they were both public scenes. The danger in the street and the danger in the storm were dangers which Hezekiah shared with his *people*. But now there has dawned for him an hour of solitary trouble—that kind of trouble hardest to bear. He is prostrated on a bed of sickness—on what to all appearance is a bed of death. And here we are confronted by a paradox—one of those touches of artistic originality which are

peculiar to the Gallery of the Bible. It is no uncommon thing to find men shrink back from the dark valley. But what causes them to shrink back is commonly supposed to be the sense of their own unworthiness. Here, we have an extraordinary combination of the sense of fear with the sense of rectitude—a blending of feelings to which I can recall no parallel. At one and the same moment Hezekiah experiences an intense shrinking from death and an intense conviction of having done his duty. He had displayed timidity before the host of Sennacherib; but on that occasion he had forgotten the presence of God. Here, he displays the same timidity in the full view of God's presence. He is quite conscious that God is beside him; he is quite certain that his soul is in a right attitude towards God. Yet, in spite of his sense of rectitude, in spite of the approving voice of his own conscience, he is filled with deepest loathing for the Valley of the Shadow. We can account for the *bad* man's terror in the hour of death; we can account for the sadness at such an hour from the sense of a work unfulfilled; but how are we to explain such a combination as this—'I beseech Thee, O Lord, remember now how I

have walked before Thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore'!

I explain it by an appeal to sober fact. I say it is on the spiritualised nature that death bears most heavily. What else does Paul mean when he says, 'If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable'! He means that a man who, like Hezekiah, is without the hope of immortality will at the approach of death be sad just in proportion to the spiritual height of his nature. For remember, in these circumstances it is the spiritual nature that is the real sufferer. Other parts of our being are apt to be blunted by disease. The passions of the body tend to exhaust themselves *with* the body. The pleasures of the world lose their zest when life's pulse is low. The objects of our physical ambition would have their attractions dulled by time even though there were no death. But where the spiritual nature exists, it is never dulled by time. Religion is not fresher with the young than with the old. The sense of wonder—which is the essence of worship—rather grows than declines with years. Our conviction of a mystic Presence deepens as we go. Knowledge

but intensifies it; experience but enriches it. To a man with such a conviction death, if it comes without the hope of immortality, must come as a foe. I have been greatly struck with one of the utterances of a Psalmist of Israel when lying under the shadow of the dark valley, 'In death there is no remembrance of Thee; in the grave who will give Thee thanks!' His one sigh was for parting with *God;* his one tear was for losing the presence of God; his one lament was for cancelling the soul's remembrance of God. He does not say, 'I grieve to quit the flowers and woods and hills.' He does not cry, 'I mourn to leave the purple and fine linen and sumptuous fare of the world's day.' All these losses are forgotten in one poignant pain, 'In death there is no remembrance of *Thee.*'

I come to the fourth hour—the hour on the hill. For the first time in his life Hezekiah has an unclouded prospect. His days have been prolonged; he has been restored to health and strength. The enthusiastic devotion of his people has welcomed him back from the gates of death. Rich offerings of thanksgiving pour into the treasury. At home and abroad the hearts of men are opened to signify their

gratitude for his restoration, and from all quarters costly gifts flow in. It is the only moment of his reign in which Hezekiah has been free from struggle. All the preceding scenes had been scenes fraught with fear; this is a mountain view, a cloudless view, the view given by a summer day.

And now comes the strange thing. This hour of prosperity, this hour on the hill, is the only hour in which Hezekiah suffers actual loss. He has passed through the furnaces of sorrow and got no hurt; but he is singed by the blaze of prosperity. 'Singed' is indeed the word. He is not burned, he is not scorched, he is not disabled; it is but a grazing of the wing; yet it dims the wing's beauty. The bird does not fall from the sky; but it flies lower. Hezekiah does not commit a great sin. What he reveals is a petty weakness—a pride of material display. He is like a child with a new toy. He throws open his treasures to the inspection of the king of Babylon. In thus tempting the Babylonian he prepares a fall for his own descendants; but it is not in this I see his loss. His loss is from within. He has dropped something of the *inner* gold; he has become proud of the wrong thing. He has be-

come satisfied, also, with the wrong security. When told that his conduct will bring ruin to his successors, he says, in effect, 'Never mind, there will be peace in *my* time.' This jars upon us. A king should not only be his own keeper, but his brother's keeper. He is meant to be more than the custodian of his personal power; he is set to guard the power of those who come after him. Is it not a pity we have this parting blot in the narrative! Should not art have secured a cloudless ending! Why bring Hezekiah triumphantly through his actual troubles, and obscure the glory of that hour when his troubles have passed away!

Now, I say that the art has here been beautiful, consummate. It supplies the one lesson that Judaism needed. To the spectators in that Gallery the only sad vision was a vision of adversity. That a man should be tarnished in the street, that a man should be shaken on the sea, that a man should be depressed in the vale —all this was felt to be natural. But that a man should be corrupted on the hill, that the hour of *prosperity* should be an hour of moral danger—this was a new thing. Men had learned to pray, 'In all time of our tribulation, in the hour of death, and in the day of judg-

ment, good Lord, deliver us!' but they had not learned to pray, 'Deliver us in all time of our *wealth!*' They could see the need for a rod and staff in passing through the Valley of the Shadow; but to cry for a rod and staff in passing through the green pastures and standing by the quiet waters—that was a strange prayer. And that was the prayer taught by Hezekiah's hill. It told the Jew not to limit his dread to the precipice. It told him to beware of the *flowers*. It bade him seek God in his sunshine. It revealed that the thorn was not man's greatest calamity. It inspired distrust of the rose, distrust of the summer day. It taught that the shade was required as well as the shining. It exhorted the human spirit not to despise the shadows cast by the tree of life. That was the high lesson proclaimed by Hezekiah's hill.

TEACH me, O Lord, that I need, not only Thy pillar of fire by night, but Thy pillar of cloud by day! I never cease to value the first; but I often forget the last. I always thank Thee for the stars in my night; but I seldom bless Thee for the spots in my sun. I have praised Thee

for the silver lining in my cloud; but I have raised no monument to my cloud itself. And yet, there are things which the shadow alone can reveal. My deepest gain is to find my want of Thee. Why has Thy pillar of cloud hovered around my day? It is to keep alive my hunger for Thee, my thirst for Thee. I need Thy shadow as much as Thy light. I would rather pray, 'Lead me!' than 'Light me!' If I could see all the way before me, I should lose the need of Thine arm; Thy leading means my leaning. Therefore, O Father, keep me from the dangers of the hill! Keep me from the perils of prosperity! Keep me from the fire without the cloud! Be the shade at my right hand that the sun smite me not! Protect me from my pride! Guard me from my glamour! Save me from my self-sufficiency! Rescue me from my recklessness! Hold me back from my heights of presumption! Pity me in the day of my power! Watch over me in the hour of my wealth! Guide me in the scene of my glory! Succour me in the summer of my year! Only then, with confidence, shall I 'lift up mine eyes unto the *hills.*'

CHAPTER VIII

ISAIAH THE PHILANTHROPIST

THERE is one point which must often have struck the student of the Jewish Gallery, and that is the contrast between its delineation of the rulers and its delineation of the prophets. In the portrayal of its patriarchs, in the description of its judges, in the presentation of its warriors, in the exhibition of its kings, in the disclosure of its family circles, the Gallery displays a graphicness which is unique. But as we pass from these spheres into the sphere of the prophets, we see a great change. Here, we are ushered into a compartment of the Gallery which, in the estimation of the Jew, is the main compartment. We should expect it to be distinguished from the others by a greater fulness of detail. On the contrary, we find a desertion of detail altogether. The figures become mere outlines, and the outlines themselves are shadowy. We see no more the tracing of a life from dawn to eve. Neither

morning nor evening is there, nor is there a clear revealing of the midday. A silhouetted form stands before us whose face is hid, whose expression is veiled, whose very attitude is but dimly recognised. Contrast the portraits of an Abraham, an Isaac, a Jacob, a Joseph, with the portraits of an Amos, an Isaiah, a Jeremiah, an Ezekiel, and you will see the full force of the difference. The former are almost modern in the interest they awaken; the latter seem far away. The former are men; the latter are shadows. The former suggest the living world; the latter come like voices from the dead.

How are we to account for this? Is it accident? No, it is too methodical for that; a thing which pervades one class exclusively cannot be accidental. Is it ignorance on the part of the delineator? No, why should the artist know less of Isaiah than of Abraham; Isaiah belonged to an age when knowledge was more easily transmitted than it was in the days of Abraham. Is it the uneventfulness of a prophet's life in comparison with a ruler's life? No, for the facts we wish to learn are just the common uneventful facts that environ men of every day—the place of birth, the

home circle, the training influences, the worldly circumstances, the struggles for survival, the loves and hates and hopes and fears that compose the lights and shadows of human life. This is what we want to know; this is what is not revealed.

Is there any explanation which can be suggested for this biographical reticence? I think there is. I believe it originates in the notion that a man's religious message has more power when separated from his personal circumstances. This is not a feeling peculiar to the Jew. It lies at the root of clerical celibacy; it forms the basis of religious asceticism. There has ever been a widespread impression that familiarity with the teacher of sacred things weakens the force of his message. How often you and I are disappointed when we have realised our wish to meet some distinguished educator of the race. We have figured to ourselves the joy of that meeting—how our hearts will burn, how our souls will be enlightened. And we have found the man a very ordinary individuals, with the average amount of human frailties and perhaps more than the average amount of human foibles. The man who habitually lives on the mountains is apt

to find himself not at home on the plains. He often shows to less advantage in commonplace things than the essentially commonplace man. The Jew felt this and sought to obviate it. He withdrew the everyday life of his prophets from common observation. He placed his Isaiah in the mist. He shrouded his form and features. He hid his environment. He concealed his domestic altar. He threw a veil over his circle and his circumstances. He allowed only his *voice* to be revealed. He would not let us look, but he bade us listen. He sent a cloud to the eye, but he lifted a curtain from the ear.

To the ear, then, let us appeal. Let us listen to the voice of this man Isaiah. Hundreds have listened to that voice for purposes of doctrine, for messages of prophecy, for exercises of criticism. But for none of these objects would I be here an auditor. I am not in search of the prophet, but of the man. I wish to see whether the knowledge which has been shut out by one entrance has been admitted by another. If we adopt the modern limits to the authorship of Isaiah, we have thirty-nine chapters recording his literary utterances. Are these utterances wholly impersonal!

Do they reveal only the destiny of nations, the fate of despots, the fall of potentates! Do they lift merely the veil of history! Do they not lift a veil also from the prophet's own life and give us some notes of an autobiography! Men have told character by the handwriting; shall they not tell character by the heart-writing! Shall a literary product reveal the spirit of its age and be silent as to the spirit of its author! If it be the spontaneous expression of thought and not the imitation of another's thought, then it is as distinctly a biographical record as if it had been the jotting of a diary or the recalling into memory of a vanished hour. Let us look therefore for the man in the manuscript. Let us try to penetrate beneath the literary veil—to see the face of the singer, to read the form of the thinker. Let us consider whether, amid the many revealings from Isaiah's pen, there has been omitted that of the object nearest to himself—his own soul.

We have not read far ere we are arrested by a note of autobiography. It is a note of a very peculiar kind. When a man gives a record of his life he usually begins by telling when and where he was born. Isaiah begins by telling where he was 'born again.' To him

his real birth was the birth of his spirit. His natal day was the day of his conversion. He is conscious of one crisis moment—a moment which rises above the level of his life as a mountain rises above the level of the sea—a drastic moment, a dreadful moment, a moment when, like Jacob, he saw the ladder between earth and heaven. It seemed to him that he stood in the temple of God—not the human temple at Jerusalem but the great Temple above. He received one glimpse of the burning purity before which cherub kneels and seraph bows and angel veils the face. And as he gazed on that everlasting fire the most commonplace fact of human experience broke upon him as a revelation. In the light of God he saw for the first time the dark spot on his own soul. No earthquake, no volcano, no rush of mighty waters ever appalled a man as Isaiah was appalled by the sight of his own heart. It was as if a deformed creature had received the present of a looking-glass and for the first time beheld his misshapenness. In the glass of the Divine glory Isaiah beheld, not only the deformity of himself, but the deformity of the world. His first vision of sin came from a sight of holiness; he

got his earliest glimpse of corruption when he gazed into the face of God.

What was this deformity which Isaiah saw in the world and in himself? No man beholds sin in the abstract; it is always a special form of sin. What is that special form of sin which Isaiah sees? It is human selfishness—the unbrotherhood of man to man. I could bring the whole Book of Isaiah to substantiate this point. From first to last the man is a humanitarian. The keynote of his message is philanthropy. The cry which rises into his ears is the cry of stricken humanity—the cry of the poor and needy, the cry of the sad and weary. The burning coal which touched his lips is the pain of human want, the parching of human thirst, the heat of human toil. He hears God calling him to lash the sins of the nation; but to him all the sins of the nation are forms of a single sin—selfishness. Does he deplore idolatry; it is because the idols of man are images of man's own glory. Does he repudiate extravagance in dress, and luxury in living; it is because this outlay of wealth might have been for the sake of the destitute. Does he vociferate against foreign alliances in the time of danger; it is because to him the evil is not without but

within, and can only be cured from within—by cultivating the barren spots in the life of the community. The burden of Isaiah is the burden of human compassion. It is the desire to right the wrongs which man has done to his brother, to kindle into flower the withered branch, to light the Valley of the Shadow, to bring the sons of darkness under the dome of day.

That was the call of Isaiah—the call to be a humanitarian preacher. We have, I think, a wrong idea of this man. We figure him as a man praying amid a world of atheists. I am convinced that his contemporaries would have put it exactly the other way; they would have said, Here is a lax man in the midst of a godly generation. If you had been living in the days of Isaiah you would have said, This is a free-thinker. His whole life was based upon the dictum that charity was better than dogma. His age was an age of dogma. Its dogmas were not articles of faith, but days of observance and rites of worship. A spectator would have said he was less religious than those whom he castigated. *They* were keeping their *Sabbaths.* They were observing their new moons. They were attending their sacrificial feasts. Isaiah

denied the good of none of these things; but he denied that they were the main things. To him the main things were justice and mercy. He would have said with Coleridge, 'He prayeth best that loveth best.' Isaiah was what in our days would be called an extreme Broad-Churchman. He often preached; but I doubt if he attended much the preaching of others. I should not be surprised to hear that he was frequently absent from the temple service. I should not be astonished to learn that he often exceeded the allowance of liberty permitted to the Sabbath. The preparation *he* proposed for meeting God was not the attendance at the temple, not the observance of the Sabbath, not the keeping of any feast whatever, but the sympathy of the heart with the wants and woes of man.

Now, in what way did Isaiah propose to inaugurate this sympathy? His initial cry was, 'Get the heart of a little child within you!' It seemed to him that before a man could begin to think of others, he must cease to think of himself—must become self-unconscious. Isaiah had a great admiration for the nursery; it was to him the type of spiritual regeneration. His idea was that the men who wish to

become philanthropists must begin by emptying themselves, by losing consciousness of themselves. He says, If you ever find one who shall bear the burdens of the world upon his shoulders, who shall be a 'prince of peace' to the unresting and a 'wonderful counsellor' to the foolish, you may be sure that this great Saviour has been first of all a childlike soul; your earliest Messianic hope will be the raising of the song, 'Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given!'

The man who attached such importance to the training of the nursery must have been a most domesticated man. I think we have generally had a contrary impression. We have figured him as the reverse of homely. The Isaiah that has floated before our eyes has been commonly a stately form treading the upper circles, walking amid courts and breathing the air of kings. The dignity of his rhythm has seemed incompatible with a modest sphere; the strength of his denunciations has appeared to imply the voice of one who moved upon the mountains. But look beneath the surface and you will change your view. There will stand before you a new Isaiah, a humble-minded Isaiah, an Isaiah whose heart

is in the valley. His very house was in the valley—in the lower part of Jerusalem. Men called the spot 'the Valley of Vision'—perhaps by way of a sneer. The Jewish prophets were never on the social heights; they were against the fashion and therefore out of the fashion. Down in his Valley of Vision Isaiah lived, far from the madding crowd—divorced from public sympathy, almost in social ostracism. But not divorced from family life. No—there the brightness comes in. Isaiah had the joy of wedded happiness. He had a wife whose mind was in tune with his own. She was familiarly called 'the prophetess'—a great compliment to her, and a great testimony to her unity with her husband. And there were two sons born to them—sons who gave Isaiah his experience of the nursery, sons whose names he has fondly recorded. Was there a vague hope in his heart that one of these might prove to be the Messianic Child—the Child who, when He reached the years of understanding, should become that ministrant Man for whom the world waited?

For, never forget that Isaiah started his spiritual life with the motto, 'Wanted—a ministrant Man.' This was *his* Messianic

hope. Others entertained different Messianic hopes. Some dwelt on the thought of a conquering king. Some regaled themselves with the prospect of a protracted feast which should compensate the years of fasting. Some anticipated with rapture an unveiling of the face of God. But Isaiah's heart was fixed on the coming of a ministrant Man. He knew this Man would come, because he knew He was needed. To the prophets of the Jewish race every genuine human want was itself a prediction; it was the shadow of the coming good. Isaiah felt that the world was waiting for a ministrant Man and that the world's waiting was God's prophecy. When this Messiah would appear, he could not tell. Perhaps at first he hoped that he himself might be the Divinely chosen One. Then, as the sense of his personal inadequacy grew upon him, he may have transferred the hoped-for glory to his first-born. Then, mayhap, remembering how often God had called to the priesthood the younger son, he may have fixed his expectation on his second child. Doubtless all these dreams had vanished; but the Messianic hope remained, undimmed, unbroken. There was wanted a hiding-place from the wind,

there was wanted a covert from the tempest; and because they were wanted they were coming—surely, inevitably. The human need was the Divine promise.

It is significant that the heart of Isaiah sought its refuge from the blast in something human, 'a *man* shall be a hiding-place from the storm and a covert from the tempest.' What has become of his *angel!* It was from an angel that he traced his ordination; it was the vision of an angel that at first inspired him. Why does he not fall back upon that vision now? He wants to see humanity healed of its wounds; why not summon cherubim and seraphim to be ministering spirits? It is because in him ministration has struck a new note of development. He has made a discovery. He says in effect: 'Hitherto we have looked to the *angels* for the succour of human woes; henceforth *man* shall be the hiding-place of man. Hitherto we have sought a covert from the tempest under an angel's wing; henceforth we shall seek it in the heart of a brother man.' That is what Isaiah meant to say when he spoke of a man as our hiding-place. He was dismissing with a wave of the hand the whole celestial army. He had

learned by experience that in the hour of sadness no angelic sympathy will suffice. He had learned by human fatherhood, by the earthly tie of husband, by the response of filial devotion, that nothing but the human can sympathetically help the human. He had learned that the very *height* of an angel was its disqualification to be a ministering spirit to man —that just by reason of that height it was unable to reach far enough down. And be it observed that the prophet's eyes were on the point *furthest* down. His was not a philanthropy that proposed to descend gradually the slope of the hill. No; he began at the foot. He fixed his eye on the darkest spot, on the most seemingly hopeless spot. He called for a ministrant Man who should go down at once to the nethermost, to the most abandoned, to the 'land of the shadow of death.' He called upon Divine grace to manifest itself in the most unlikely region—among the 'people that walked in darkness'—among the sons of 'Gentile Galilee.' His cry is for a Son of Man who shall seek and save the *lost,* who shall stimulate the barren fig-tree, who shall gather in even those whom the world has cast out, who shall cleanse the lepers for whom earth itself is too

pure, who shall waken from the grave humanity's dead.

The truth is, the man Isaiah himself is the finest prophecy of the coming Christ. That ministrant human soul for whom he longed, was his own ideal of what he *wished* to be. You may measure every man's character by the character of his Messiah; his Messiah is his ideal, his estimate of what to him would constitute riches. If his Christ is a physical conqueror, then his is a physical mind. If his Christ is a criminal judge, then his is a legal mind. If his Christ is a reigning king, then his is a political mind. If his Christ is a seeker of the lost, then his is a philanthropic mind. Why do I call Isaiah a philanthropist? It is because his ideal—his Christ, is a philanthropist, a lover of man, a lover of the unloveliest man. The prophecies of Isaiah are the wishes of Isaiah; and a man's wishes are the measure of him. Not by what a human soul achieves do I determine his watermark. I fix it by what he wants to achieve—*that* is his Messiah and that is his righteousness. I know not what Isaiah actually accomplished. I know not how many souls he saved in Galilee or how many hearts he lifted from the valley of the shadow

of death. But I do know that his ideal was a ministrant Man—a Man who should save unto the uttermost, a Man who should go down to the region of the dead. To image such a Man, to appreciate such a Man, to worship such a Man, was in germ to *be* such a Man; and I impute to the prophet the righteousness he saw in his Lord.

It is by the philanthropy of Isaiah that I explain a phase of his mind which I have always felt to be very peculiar—its strange mixture of severity and tenderness. There have been severe men, and there have been tender men, and there have been men who have revealed one type yesterday and the other today. But it is a rare thing to see the two revealed at the same moment. That spectacle appears in Isaiah. He is like one of those days in which we have simultaneous rain and sunshine; and we do not know whether to weep or smile. Nothing can exceed the blast of his anger; it is withering, annihilating. But, even while he denounces, there is a quivering in the voice which speaks volumes on the other side. In one and the same chapter we have the touch of Esau and the voice of Jacob. It is not that the rainbow comes *after* the flood. The

mystery lies in the fact that flood and rainbow exist together, and that the peaks of Ararat never cease to be visible even while the ark tosses on the face of the waters.

But is not this ever the law of redeeming grace. Our anger at the failure of those we love is not proportionate to our sense of their worthlessness but to our sense of their possibilities. We do not castigate those who are without promise. When the teacher sees his pupil making no progress the cloud of his displeasure is just in proportion to his vision of the bow. If he sees no bow, if he believes the pupil to be hopelessly dull, he will not be angry. But if he says to himself, 'This is a lad of parts who might do much better,' it is then he dwells within the cloud of his displeasure. His severity is prompted by his favourable estimate—his sense of unused capacities, his vision of unemployed powers, his conviction that behind the day and the hour there lurks a life worthy to be redeemed.

Now, that is what Isaiah felt towards Judah. For I would direct special attention to the fact that in all his exhortations he professes to be calling her back to her former self. He summons her to no new life of untried capac-

ities; his cry is 'Return'! He feels that she *can* be better because she once *was* better. He points her to no speculative height; he bids her be true to her first traditions. He tells her to resume her original level of humanitarian sympathy. He declares that the spirit of philanthropy was her starting-point, that the dawning of her day was the breath of brotherhood. It is not as a reformer that he preaches the charity of man to man; it is as a conservative. He claims the life of human sympathy as the original life of the nation. He tells his countrymen that if they want to see their true glory they must not look to the future but to the past, 'Thine ear shall hear a voice *behind* thee, saying, This is the way; walk ye in it.' To him the philanthropic age was indeed the age behind him. Had not the service of man been the first motive of the commonwealth! Was it not this that had stimulated an Abraham! Was it not this that had inspired a Moses! Was it not this that had quickened a Boaz! Was it not this that had given wings to a David and wisdom to a Solomon! Was it not this that lay at the origin even of religious forms! Was not the Sabbath for man's rest, circumcision for man's health, sacrifice for

the sanctifying of man's food! No wonder Isaiah's cry is 'Return'! The ministrant Man for whom he had looked had been the Man of his country's morning. The future he beheld for her was the reflex of an idealised past. He believed in her to-morrow because he believed in her yesterday. Her Messianic day was no foreign day. It was her time of revival, her hour of rehabiliment. The Man who was to be her hiding-place from the storm, the Man who was to be her covert from the tempest, was the same who under the shadows of Peniel had wrestled with Jacob until the breaking of the day.

BE mine, O Lord, the vision seen by this old philanthropist—a vision of the ministrant Man! To me, as to him, that is the dress in which Thy Messiah is most beautiful. I have seen Him in many robes. I have seen Him on the banks of Jordan communing with an open heaven. I have seen Him in Judea's wilderness foiling the tempter's power. I have seen Him at Cana's feast manifesting forth His glory. I have seen Him on the Beatific Mount giving Thy laws to men. I have seen

Him in the hour of exaltation transfigured into shining face and glittering garments. But to me He will be dearest in His humblest dress—His hospital dress. Not amid the pearls of the Magi, not amid the songs of Bethlehem, not amid the palm-leaves of Jerusalem, not even amid the splendours of Olivet, am I nearest to Thy Christ. But down in dark Galilee, down in the region of the shadow, down in the valley of the dead—it is *there* I love to meet Him. Where the leper is loathed, where the demoniac is denounced, where the Magdalene is maltreated, where the sick are stigmatised—it is *there* I love to meet Him. Where the child is checked in its growth, where the woman is warped in her progress, where the poor are pushed to the wall, where the friendless are forgotten, where the lapsed are left to die, where the tripping are trodden down, where the weak are weeded out by the strong—it is *there* I love to meet Him. There I see the refuge from the storm, there I behold the covert from the tempest. Others may admire Him most in His garb of transfigured glory; but to me His fairest costume is the robe He wore for Calvary.

CHAPTER IX

JEREMIAH THE MELANCHOLY

HAS it ever struck you how few instances the Jewish Gallery presents of a *melancholy* man? Glance at all the portraits we have considered, and you will find no trace of such. Adam is the child in the garden enjoying the fruits and flowers. Abel owes his untimely end to prosperity. Noah makes merry in his old age. Abraham is upheld by high anticipations. Ishmael, despite his desert life, cannot keep down his spirit. Lot is loaded with earth's benefits. Joseph realises his dreams. Moses sees his promised land. I cannot in all our past survey recall one case of an intrinsically sad man—sad by nature, sad by temperament. Even Job is no exception. Job is not melancholy by nature. He is the reverse. His every utterance is an averment that joy is his birthright—an assertion that the misery he endures is foreign to his character. His friends want him to take the other view—to say that

his sufferings are the outcome of his nature. But he vehemently refuses. He declines to admit that sorrow is his natural portion. He insists on regarding it as something abnormal, something incongruous, something unexplained by the constitution of man.

The truth is, the Jew is habitually joyous. The leading article of his creed is the congruity between virtue and happiness. I think his creed is the result of his temperament. The most remarkable thing about him is the unconquerableness of his joy. Whether in his hymns or in his history, the phenomenon is the same; his hope dominates his fear. He is often downcast, but never for long and never absolutely. He never goes down to the *foot* of the pit; he is always pulled up before he reaches it. He often cries bitterly; but it is the cry of a child not accustomed to pain. His spirit keeps him alive in places where others would be dead. He has been found sanguine in the most sanguinary circumstances. The chords of his harp have struck our joyous strains when the cords of his *heart* might be expected to have been broken. He has had moments of ecstasy in exile, seasons of rapture amid scenes of rapine. The men of this

Jewish Gallery have for the most part retained a smiling face.

But we come now to a figure which in our survey is unique—the form of the priest-prophet Jeremiah. For the first time in the Gallery we stand before the portrait of a man constitutionally sad. I do not mean that even he is without hope. But his only hope is in a new creation—a new covenant between God and man. The two figures which in thought I have always placed beside one another are Jeremiah and Job. But in doing so I do not know whether I am more influenced by their resemblance or by their contrast. For there is a great *un*likeness amid their likeness. Both give unstinted expression to their pain; but there the similarity ends and the difference begins. To Jeremiah and to Job the pain may be equal in amount, but it is very different in quality. To Job it was something which interfered with the rights of man; to Jeremiah it was man's rightful inheritance. To Job it was a thing abnormal; to Jeremiah it was the only result compatible with a sinful state. To Job it was an element to be resisted; to Jeremiah it was a fate to be accepted and acquiesced in. Job fretted against it as a blot on the universe;

Jeremiah looked upon it as the only possible means by which the existing blot on the universe might eventually be removed.

Jeremiah, then, is a unique figure in the Gallery. He is a man who finds sorrow his atmosphere, his home—a man who feels it more natural to lament than to rejoice. He is perfectly conscious of this uniqueness; 'Behold and see,' he says, 'if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow!' It is not often that a man confesses himself to be peculiar. Specially in the sphere of affliction are we eager to find either precedents or accompaniments. If we have a particular ailment it comforts us to know that our case is not abnormal; we start in search of kindred experiences. But this man feels his case to be, in Jewish annals, without analogy. Amid all his contemporaries, amid all his ancestors, he sees no parallel. He realises the eccentricity of his own position, and, with its eccentricity, its solitude. He feels himself to be alone in the circles of the present, alone in the gallery of the past. He claims to represent a fresh type of man, a phase of human nature new to the portraiture of ancient Israel—the man who accepts pain as a

birthright, the man who deems it his *duty* to be sad.

What is the ground of this sorrow of Jeremiah? That is the main question which invites our interest. I will begin by answering it negatively; I will consider what was not its ground. And first, I would remark that the sadness of Jeremiah did not result from his vision of God's impending judgments. That these judgments were impending is a historic fact; that Jeremiah did behold them is a literary certainty. The air was full of them and his books are full of them. Nebuchadnezzar was at the gates of Jerusalem; all the might of Babylon was gathered against her. Her own power was at the lowest. Her glory had departed. Her kings had become mere puppets. Her priests had grown corrupt. Her prophets were birds without song. Her people were steeped in iniquity. She had no spiritual weapons to resist Babylon—faith was faint, devotion was dead; the foreigner was sure to win. All this is true, incontrovertibly true. And yet, this is not Jeremiah's grief. However much he laments the sin of the people, he does not lament the judgment of God. He glories in it. He *welcomes* the approaching

victory of Babylon. He accepts Nebuchadnezzar as God's servant. He is eager that his countrymen should submit themselves to the yoke of the stranger. He calls upon them to yield to the impending storm, to cast themselves, Jonah-like, into the sea, and to accept their penalty as a messenger from heaven. He courts chastisement, he invites retribution, he hails as an ally the day of punishment.

Can we account for this? I think we can. You have only to figure Jeremiah as under the influence of conscience, and all is clear. Jeremiah here reveals, not in his prophecy but in himself, one of the deepest laws of conscience. The popular opinion is that a conscience-stricken man is eager to avert punishment. He is not. He is eager to get rid of his present pain, he is eager to remedy his deed of wrong; but he does not wish to avert punishment. He looks to the bearing of his penalty as the only possible source of relief, and he would rather accelerate than delay it. George Mac Donald, in one of his novels, makes a boy come to the keeper of an orchard and say, 'I stole apples; beat me!' Jeremiah has the same feeling as this boy in the orchard. He identifies himself with his country; he has elected to share her fate

whatever it may be. But he feels that if she is penitent she ought to wish for a penalty. She has robbed the Lord's orchard; she should accept the Lord's chastening. She should voluntarily go to receive the weight of His impending hand. Instead of hiding herself among the trees of the garden, hers should be the open cry, 'I stole apples; beat me!'

Jeremiah's sadness, then, was not the result of beholding God's impending judgments on his native land—this is the first of the negative answers as to the cause of his melancholy. But I would remark, secondly, that his melancholy did not result from his personal calamities. His life, indeed, was full of such calamities. Few human experiences have been so environed with cloud and storm. He had forty-two years of active service, and they were years of trouble. From beginning to end he was a mark for obloquy. The people disliked him; his brother priests hated him; his brother prophets scorned him. He was always under suspicion; he was often in custody; he was sometimes in danger of death. In his last years he was driven into exile—banished to the land of Egypt. He had desired his exile to be in *Babylon,* because he felt exile in Babylon

to be *God's* penalty. To be banished by God is one thing, to be banished by man is another; an idea may transform a circumstance. Tell a man that his Patmos is God's revelation to him, and he may well bear it; but if Patmos shuts the *door* of revelation it can be nothing but a thorn. Jeremiah's life was sown among thorns; it was a series of tribulations. And yet, these are not the cause of his melancholy. They are the effect of his melancholy. So far from being the ground of his sadness, they came to him on account of his sadness. Why did men hate him and persecute him? Just because he was a lugubrious man. He wept amid their fancied triumphs. He mourned amid their pageants. He wrung his hands when they shouted. He pulled down his flag when theirs went up. He sang dirges when they chanted the national anthem. The sorrows which they heaped upon him were sorrows heaped upon an already melancholy man, and heaped upon him by reason of that melancholy.

There is a third thing to which the sadness of Jeremiah cannot be attributed, and that is, any special sense of personal sin. There are different experiences in the spiritual world as

there are different experiences in the temporal world. There are men whose souls are nursed in spiritual storm; they enter the kingdom with violence, they come to the crown through the cross. There are others who have just the opposite experience. They cannot point to any time when they were conscious of a crisis, a change, a revolution in their mode of thinking. Life has for them been one uniform calm. They have received their illumination, not as Paul—in a lightning flash from heaven, but as Nathanael—through the branches of a fig-tree. Now, Jeremiah is one of this latter kind. He seems to have been born in the very air of heaven, to have breathed it without interruption, to have assimilated it without impurities. He says himself that his call came to him when yet a child. Any timidity he experiences is solely on the ground of youth; he has no sense of inward struggle. I cannot but contrast his call with the call of Isaiah. Isaiah's vision of God was an awful thing. It came to him as something which burned, which threatened to destroy. It came as an interruption of life's routine, as an arrest of the natural day; it brought the sense of human nothingness. But Jeremiah's spirit was a sheltered

lake. There was loud noise on either bank, there was fierce tumult all along the enclosing land; but the lake itself was smooth, placid, unruffled. His was not a tossing of the spirit. He had neither a doubt nor a fear of God's dealings. He had no uncertainty of his own rectitude. His heart was at peace with heaven.

I have now considered the ground of Jeremiah's sadness negatively, that is to say, I have considered what is not its ground. We pass next to its positive aspect, what did constitute the cause of his suffering. Now, there is one thing clear on the surface. In looking for the secret of Jeremiah's grief we are limited to a single sphere of selection—the mental sphere. It came from a cause invisible to the by-stander. The prophet declares in so many words that those who looked upon him did so without compassion, 'Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by!' The picture conveyed in these words is that of a man alone amidst a crowd. On the one hand there is no outward solitude; the people are gathered there. Jeremiah is not in a desert; he is in a populous street. The multitude throng him, press him, jostle him as they pass by. But, on the other hand, they *do* pass by—they have no touch for his *soul.*

His lamentations are incomprehensible to them. They wonder why he weeps. They see no cause for tears. No obloquy has yet arisen. No dungeon has yet opened. No outward sword has yet been pointed at his breast. What has the man to complain of? There is nothing which can be seen, nothing which can be weighed, nothing which can be measured. Can anything hurt which cannot be seen or weighed or measured? Can there be a wound where there is no weapon, a bending without a burden, a pain which cannot be painted?

And the answer must be, Yes. That is exactly the description of the thing called mental pain—a heaviness caused by something imponderable. And here I want to direct attention to a curious fact—the prominence given to mental pain in the Bible Gallery. However little it was appreciated by the crass multitude, it has the special appreciation of the sacred artist. I have said that the men of the Gallery are by nature men of joy; but we are at all times sad from circumstance. And what I say is that the circumstances which break the natural joy of the Bible heroes are oftener mental than material. The sorrows of Noah come not from the flood. The trial of

Abraham issues from his own soul. The griefs of Moses are of the spirit. The damps that dim the fires of Elijah are all from within. Job remains undaunted by poverty, by bereavement, by sickness; but his patience is made at last to tremble by the suggestion of an abstract thought. Why did the Jew shrink from suffering physical pain? Mainly because he deemed it non-physical. It was an *idea* that made him shrink. He feared earthly suffering, not for what it was, but for what it seemed to signify. He feared it because its coming meant to him an absent God, a displeased Divinity, an offended Heaven. The pains of the Jew are chiefly mental pains. He dreads the shadow, not so much for what it brings as for what it eclipses—not so much because it darkens the face of his world as because it hides the face of his God.

Jeremiah, then, was a mental sufferer—his affliction came from within. What was the nature of this mental suffering? The pain of the mind may have as many different sources as the pain of the body. Every feeling of the heart has its own special pain—pride, humility, anger, envy, love. What is Jeremiah's source of mental unrest? It came from the

keenness of his intellectual sympathy. Intellectual sympathy is the power to put yourself in the place of another—to feel another's experience as if it were your own. Men possess the power in vastly varying degrees. In some it seems almost absent—there are those who say, 'Am I my brother's keeper!' In others it is so strong that it appears to absorb the personal life—to leave no room for the individual wants. It reaches its climax in the Son of Man, in whom the identity between the sufferer and the spectator is so pronounced that He can say of the calamities of life, 'Inasmuch as they did it unto the least of my brethren, they have done it unto Me.'

Into whose place does *Jeremiah* put himself? That is the final question, the crucial question. And the answer is beyond measure a startling one—he puts himself in the place of God. He tries to imagine what he himself would feel if he were God Almighty beholding the state of His creatures. He says to himself, 'If I were the Divine Being seated upon the throne of the universe and looking upon the ruin of the land I had loved so well, what would my feeling at this moment be?' He says it would be the feeling of a loving husband

towards an unfaithful wife. He pours forth the love-song of a wounded heart, but he conceives it as sung by the Almighty. It is God's song he sings—not his own. He loses sight of his own personality. His heart breaks with the Divine burden, his spirit groans with the Divine grief. It is the most remarkable vicarious sorrow I know in the whole course of the Old Testament. Isaiah's was a vicarious sorrow; he, too, put himself in the place of another. But Isaiah put himself in the place of the people; his was, after all, the sympathy of the human with the human. Jeremiah put himself in the place of God; his was the sympathy of the human with the Divine. A phase of mind so striking demands a moment's consideration.

We are again and again exhorted to pity the sorrows of those beneath us, in other words, to imagine ourselves encompassed by the privations of an inferior condition. But conceive the exhortation given, 'Pity the sorrows of *God;* try to sympathise with the cares incidental to a Divine Being!' Should we not feel the mandate to be the wildest of paradoxes. We never think of sympathy as *ascending.* We think of it as going down, as going round, but not as going up. To pity that which is above us is a

novel thing; it seems almost a contradiction in terms. Yet this is the gospel of Jeremiah, nay, this is the gospel of a greater than Jeremiah. What means the solicitation to take up the Cross of Christ? What means the exhortation to participate in the sacrifice of Calvary? What means the invitation to have communion with the body and blood of the 'Man from heaven'? Is it not simply the call to lend your human pity to the sorrows of the Divine Life —to enter sympathetically within the gates of its Gethsemane? Divested of all forms, what else than this is meant by the fellowship with Christ's sufferings? The key-note of Christianity is sympathy with God, solicitude for God, anxiety for God. Why does the prayer which teaches to pray make me begin with the *Divine* wants? Why does it tell me, before asking for my daily bread or even for my pardon, to say, 'Hallowed by Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven'? It is because Christian sympathy is, before all things, sympathy with God, because the deepest shadow which presses upon the soul of a follower of Christ is a vision of the cloud which seeks to dim His glory.

Now, Jeremiah comes very near to this New Testament picture. It is to him we owe the very phrase 'New Testament'; he was the first who ever used it. He was before his time. Posterity felt this—felt that he should have belonged to a later age. It is to this that I attribute the legend of after days that he rose from the dead. Men came to realise that his own age was unripe for him, and they tried to bring him further down the stream. I do not wonder. He is to my mind the most modern of the ancients. He is closer to the Cross of Christ than any pre-Christian man I know. In a more direct sense than Isaiah he is entitled to the name which Isaiah bears—'the Evangelical Prophet.' Isaiah has more Messianic vision, but Jeremiah has more Messianic feeling. Isaiah is a humanitarian—he wants a Christ for the sake of man; Jeremiah is a mystic—he wants a Christ for the sake of God. Isaiah seeks to cleanse the earthly temple; Jeremiah desires to gladden the heavenly courts. Isaiah looks at the sorrows of *men* and longs for a deliverer; Jeremiah contemplates the sorrows of the All-Father and longs for a comforter. Isaiah views the work of the Christ as a source of peace to the struggling human

heart; Jeremiah views the work of the Christ as a source of joy to the Divine Spirit. The prayer of Isaiah is the Lord's Prayer, but it is the second half—'Give us our daily bread,' 'Forgive us our debts,' 'Lead us not into temptation.' The prayer of Jeremiah is the earlier trio—'Hallowed be Thy name,' 'Thy kingdom come,' 'Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.'

BE this my opening prayer, O Father—the prayer for *Thee!* Let me put Thy wants first, foremost! Ere I remember my daily bread, let me remember Thy Divine beauty! Ere I ask for my pardon, let me pray for Thy prosperity! Ere I beseech Thee for my guidance, let me wish Thee to be glorified! Hitherto, I have given all my sympathy to the wants of my brother; let me remember the wants of my Father! I have heard men say, 'God is sufficient unto Himself.' Nay, my Father—for Thy name is Love. Love *cannot* be sufficient unto itself; the larger it is, the less self-sufficing it must be. Teach me the sorrows of an infinite love in a loveless world! Help me to understand Thy cry for communion! Let

me feel the solitude of being Divine when there is no heart to share the Divineness! Let me enter into the *pain* of my Lord—the pain of unrequited love! Let me break Thy loneliness with the touch of a kindred hand! Often have I said 'Thy kingdom come' for my own sake; let me say it for Thine! Often have I prayed 'Thy will be done' to bring my peace; let me pray it to bring Thine! Thy heart is not at rest when other hearts are hardened; Thy Spirit is on the *waters* when other wills are wayward. I understand Jeremiah's sorrow. I understand his pity for Thy lonely perfectness, Thy solitary greatness, Thine unshared purity. I understand his sadness for the single star of Bethlehem—alone in a boundless sky. I understand his tears over Thy heart without a home, Thy love without a lodgment, Thy revealing without response, Thine appeals without answer, Thy calls without communion, Thy cares without companionship, Thy work without watchers, Thy voice without vibration in a human soul. In my prayers, O God, let me remember *Thee!*

CHAPTER X

EZEKIEL THE INDIVIDUALIST

THERE are three figures in the Great Gallery which I am disposed to set apart from the rest, and to designate. 'The Three Sympathies.' Each of them expresses a different phase of sympathetic feeling, and becomes, to future times, the representative of that phase. These three figures are Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel —the two portraits immediately preceding and the portrait at which we have now arrived. Isaiah represents sympathy with the masses; he has taken up into his heart the sorrows of the *Galilees* of life. Jeremiah represents sympathy with God; he has entered into the secret place of the Divine Pavilion and shared the burdens of the Divine Spirit. But Ezekiel is to give us an experience different from either of these—that of a man in sympathy with the individual soul. The two preceding prophets were birds of expansive wing; they soared over vast spaces. Vastness, indeed,

is their characteristic. Jeremiah has put himself sympathetically in the place of the Almighty, has tried to figure in words the experience of the All Father. Isaiah has put himself sympathetically in the place of the multitude, has considered the sorrows and sins of the nation as a whole. But there is an element different from either of these. These are seen by the telescope; there is an element which requires the microscope. What of the individual man viewed *apart* from the masses? What of the man viewed, not as an item of the census, but as a living, breathing, separate human soul? That is the question which Isaiah, which Jeremiah, has left unanswered and whose answer is to come from other lips. It is reserved for the lips of Ezekiel. Ezekiel is distinctively the prophet for the individual—the prophet who looks through the microscope. Isaiah soars to the heights of the world; Jeremiah compasses the breadth of the world; but Ezekiel takes notice of the world's little things.

And let me say in passing that the care for the individual is not a *primitive* stage of culture. It is a late development of the art of every gallery. The progress of the human race is not a march from the individual to the

masses; it is a march from the masses to the individual. Man does not begin by realising himself as a separate unit. He gets his earliest vision of himself as the member of a clan. At the outset, one man was very like another. Humanity had no individual movements; it moved in masses at the impulse of a chieftain's will. Variation comes with development, and deepens with each stage of development. The individual man is always at the top of the hill. I do not mean that he *reaches* the top of the hill; he is born there. He never sees the light until humanity is at the summit. Life is a tapering process; it is broad at the base and narrow at the top. Its latest fruit is a self-reflecting soul—a soul recognising its separateness from all other souls and, by the very sense of its individual isolation, arriving at the conviction of a personal responsibility.

I have called Ezekiel the prophet for the individual life. How did he become so? By an event which at the time was interpreted as a cloud on the Divine government. I have no hesitation in saying that the special providence in Ezekiel's history was one of those incidents which seem to deny the *existence* of a Providence. The point is so striking in its

bearing on the mission of Ezekiel, and so suggestive of the possibility of lights in similar clouds, that it may not be wholly profitless to spend a few moments in its elucidation.

And first of all, I wish to state that in my opinion every original circumstance of Ezekiel's life was *against* his becoming the prophet of the individual soul. The very things which are popularly thought to have prepared him for his mission were really adverse to his preparation. That he was the son of a priest and himself trained to the priest's office, that he could boast a long line of clerical ancestors, that he was born and bred in an age of religious revivalism, that his youth was passed amid a rejuvenescence of the national hope—all this is true. But it is just on this account that Ezekiel had special disadvantages for speaking to the individual man. To the Jew of that age the priest was a cabinet-minister, and the revival of religion meant the revival of political dreams. The hope that had burst into rejuvenescence was not the hope of immortality for the man, but the hope of immortality for the nation. Nothing could be more unfavourable to the individual man of that day than the roseate expectation of na-

tional glory. What did it mean but this, that the unit was to sink himself, bury himself, annihilate himself for the common good, without possibility of personal reaping and without prospect of sharing in the harvest hour. It said to the Jew: 'Have no private life. Live for your country. Live in the life of the empire. Abandon all thought of the personal. Merge your own destiny in the destiny of the nation. Pray for no immortality but the immortality of your native land.'

It was such a blast of imperialism that fell on the early years of Ezekiel. He grew up in an atmosphere where the public life took precedence of the private life, where the man was lost in the crowd. The religious revival was a revival of war fever. It was an appeal, not to the God of conscience but to the God of battles. It was an attempt to awaken, not souls, but masses. It was a dream of restoring the palmy political days—the days of David, the days of Solomon. Before the eyes of long-repressed Judah there flashed again the prospect of imperial power. In a burst of theocratic fanaticism she threw herself into the strife of nations. She sent forth her little army to arrest the march of the Egyptian Pharaoh-Necho.

Her king Josiah led the way—Josiah the loved, the pious, the God-anointed. She saw in him a second David; her heart burned with the anticipated glory. The young Ezekiel beheld his country go forth in battle array; and all around him rang the great refrain, 'The days of our David have returned!'

Suddenly there is a crash, a series of crashes. In swift dramatic sequence come the acts of a dreadful tragedy. On the bloody field of Megiddo Josiah falls, Judah falls. The flowers of the forest have withered; the pride of Zion is slain. Pharaoh-Necho plants his foot upon the vanquished soil; he is about to take possession. But ere he can grasp the fruit, another claims the tree. Nebuchadnezzar comes—with all the power of Babylon behind him. The rival claimants fight, and Nebuchadnezzar wins. Judah lies prostrate at the feet of the Babylonian. He grants her a nominal king—a king who shall be his vassal and his tributary. The puppet king rebels. Then Nebuchadnezzar says, 'This people shall rebel no more; I will transport them gradually into my own country.' He begins by transporting the élite, because the best men are the most dangerous men. Ten thousand of the

strongest are drafted into Babylon and set to work on the banks of the Chebar. Among them is young Ezekiel.

What a cruel providence! you say—to arrest this young man's missionary career on the very threshold! Was it not a bad training in the knowledge of God to see piety rewarded with Divine contempt? The men around were asking—perhaps Ezekiel himself was asking—why should good King Josiah have been treated like bad King Ahab? Why should his hopes of national reform have been recompensed by the dismemberment of the nation altogether? Why should his zeal for the glory of God have met with so unkind a response as the dissolution of his kingdom and the banishment of his people?

I answer, this dark cloud was a disguised mercy; it enclosed one of the brightest episodes in the annals of the Great Gallery. For the first time in the history of Judaism God was about to speak to each individual man—to address, not the nation, but its inhabitants one by one. Was it not well that He should speak to them in a foreign land! Up to this time the private individual had not appropriated the words of God; he had said, 'They

are not meant for me; they are intended for the nation.' God said, 'I will *sweep away* the nation, and then each private soul will know that I speak to *him.*' If God's voice was to be heard by the private soul, was it not well that the people should first be banished from their own land! Had not their own land been their barrier to private communion! They had thought of their God as too political to be personal, too zealous for the *mass* to be careful for the *man.* Their very sense of loyalty had obscured the rights of the individual soul. Therefore God broke their tie of loyalty. He removed them from their country, from their army, from their temple, from their king. He reduced them to units. He made each man pass in single file before the judgment-seat—dissociated from an empire, dissevered from a clan, alone with his own heart. The exile was a golden exile—an ushering of the soul into the immediate presence of God.

And the man who was to carry the message to the private soul was Ezekiel. The dark cloud was his special providence; it dispelled his adverse surroundings; it made his mission possible. Not that I think even Ezekiel, at first, saw this. I believe that for some time the

captive youth walked rather by faith than by sight. Separated from home, friends, kindred, and hopes of worldly promotion, he had much outward cause for sorrow. The wonder is that he did not sink. What saved him from sinking? What kept him above the waves till he caught the rope of his destiny? Have we any clue which can guide us to an answer? I think we have. Little as we know about Ezekiel's life, the book which bears his name gives us one point of information which is quite unique and which is worth a whole biography; it tells us what sort of characters he took for his model. If I want to know how a man will bear adversity, I would rather study his models than anything else about him. Tell me what he admires, tell me who are his ideals of heroism, and I will tell you how he will take misfortune. If his ideal is Napoleon, he will succumb; if his typical hero is Francis of Assisi, he will cling to the last plank. You may judge a man by his favourite model either in fact or fiction; for, that which we admire we aspire to, and that which we eulogise we seek to emulate.

Now, Ezekiel's style of hero is an open secret. He has revealed to us the three bio-

graphical names that he loves the best—Noah, Job, Daniel. And these three are one. Vastly different in their environment, they represent the same type of character. They were a strangely selected trio. Noah was a man of history. Job was a memory of tradition. Daniel was a living contemporary—still very young, as yet only rising into fame, but beckoning by his example his fellow exiles on. What was the point common to these three? Was it not this—that, in different ways, they had all lost their world. Noah had seen the fashion of his age pass away, and had stood amid the wreck of former things. Job had seen the glories of life perish, and had dwelt amid the ashes of the past. Daniel had been transplanted from Judah into Babylon, and had become a stranger in a strange land. Yet none of these had fainted. Noah had inaugurated his new world with a feast. Job had ended by seeing God in the whirlwind. Daniel had learned the language of that country in which he was an exile. They breathed the one refrain, 'Suffer, and be strong!'

Armed with these three ideals—which I think came to his mind successively, not simultaneously—Ezekiel passed through the stages

of youth and kept his faith alive. He dwelt in the little colony of Tel-Abib in Chaldea, on the banks of the river Chebar. Doubtless he supported himself by the work of his hands. He possessed that determination of will which can secure success in any sphere. Success he certainly had. We find him in the course of time established there in a house of his own and united to one whom he devotedly loved—so devotedly that he calls her the desire of his eyes. Spite of his exile, life glided smoothly; his hand prospered in labour; his heart flowered with domestic bliss. So, the hours of morning passed and the hour of noonday came. He reached his thirtieth year. And then there happened something—something which no historian could see, something which no painter could discover, something which belongs exclusively to the life of the spirit, but which changed the course of Ezekiel for evermore.

One day, as he strayed by the river-side, he had what he calls a vision—what would now be called a spiritual experience. He had walked by that river-side every day for the last fifteen years, and he had seen no vision there. Why should the waters of the Chebar

tell him something to-day which they did not tell him yesterday! But, is Ezekiel alone in that experience! Is it not a universal law—a law of all life! Are there not seasons when the things around us acquire a sacramental value to individual minds! There have been moments when the bush which you have always thought a most commonplace object has burned with heavenly fire. There have been times in which you have said of a heap of stones, 'This is none other than the house of God.' There have been seasons when a Bible text has struck us with quite unique significance and reverberated with a fresh meaning. Like Miss Proctor's lost chord, it may convey a note which was not there yesterday and which may not be there to-morrow. It may convey a note which I hear, and you do not. Doubtless there were men besides Ezekiel on the banks of the Chebar that day; but these saw only a sheet of water and heard only a murmuring sound. To Ezekiel the sheet of water was a crystal mirror revealing the kingdom of God, and the murmuring sound was the voice of the Divine Spirit. It spoke to Ezekiel as if he were the only human being in the world; it addressed him as 'son of man.'

It separated him from the crowd in the midst of his secular work, in the midst of the garish day. The waters of Chebar were visible, audible, to the whole multitude—and to them the sacrament would doubtless come *some* day. But, for this hour, the waters were a sacrament to Ezekiel alone; through the element most familiar to daily sight *he* was listening in solitude to the voice of God.

And what did that voice say—or rather, that beginning of many voices? What was the message which, that day and all the after days, greeted him by the river-side? Let me try to paraphrase it. It said: Ezekiel, your people have an exaggerated sense of the power of heredity. They are making the sins of their fathers an excuse for their own. They are claiming their iniquities as an inevitable inheritance; they are trying to throw their responsibility upon the long line of their ancestors. Go and tell them they are mistaken! Tell them there is a force in this world *besides* hereditary force—the force of the individual soul! Tell them there is a power in the personal will which can modify the will of the ages! Proclaim to each man that he is *not*

bound to yield to the current of the stream! Bid him remember that he can resist the current! Reveal to him the secret of his own personality—its secret and its awfulness! Tell him to practise inflexibility, to practise resistance to the waters! Bid him cultivate determination, resolution, unwaveringness of purpose! Teach him to train his will as he would train his eye! Exhort him to withstand by daily exercise the pressure of that ancestral stream of passion which has widened into a river and is deepening into a sea!

That is the message to Ezekiel. I could imagine no more trenchant message for our own day. We are very much in the position of Ezekiel's countrymen. We have invested heredity with an absolute power. We are in danger of forgetting our responsibility. We want an Ezekiel—some preacher to tell us, not of the race, but of the individual. We want something to strengthen, not the nation, but the unit. Anything that gives force to the individual man will be our Ezekiel, and ought to be welcomed as such. Is it not just on this ground that the educators of our day have smiled upon athletics. Is it not because to this century the most needed of all influences is

the power of an inflexible will—a will that can resist an adverse environment and cleave its way through surrounding obstacles. Our age needs the sense of personal power. It has a sense of political power, a sense of military power, a sense of imperial power; but these are powers of the community. What of the boy, the youth, the man? What of the soul in its silent hours, in its secret moments? Is there to be no training for personal force, no regimen for the individual will, no discipline to harden the mental fibres, no school to teach endurance to the oppressed spirit?

It is a singular circumstance that the one glimpse we have of Ezekiel's domestic life reveals him in this school of self-discipline. It is one of the most touching pieces of autobiography ever given to the world; and it is given in four verses. He tells us that one morning the wife who was the desire of his eyes was suddenly smitten with a deadly illness; she died that night. We see him standing in the chamber of death with 'night' in his soul. To-morrow he was to have spoken to the people; to-morrow he was to have preached on the banks of the Chebar to the individual hearts of men. Surely none will expect him to fulfil

the engagement! Surely all will see that the pressure of the flesh is too strong for the will of the spirit! But is not that the very doctrine he has been called to decry! Is not that the very sentiment he has been commissioned to repudiate! Shall he, the preacher, unsay his own teaching! Shall he, whom God has sent to proclaim the personal rights of duty over the influence of passion, be the first in his own practice to nullify the message! No; he will not yield his principle to his pain. To-morrow he will be there—on the banks of the Chebar with the thirsting crowd. To-morrow he will be there—there with a broken heart but an unbroken purpose, with weary step but unwearied resolve. To-morrow he will be there—to tell in earthly sadness the good tidings of heavenly joy, to preach a personal peace which the world cannot take away.

And he *was* there; and there we will leave him. On no nobler spot could the curtain of his life fall. The Bible never records the *death* of its prophets. Isaiah may have been sawn asunder, Jeremiah may have been stoned, Ezekiel may have died in bed; but these events have no record in the Bible. In the thought of the spectator the Bible prophet is

never to die. He has a message which is timeless, and his image is to be timeless. Men who work for their day and generation receive a memorial stone to mark their boundary-line. We see Abraham's Cave of Machpelah. We hear Jacob and Joseph pronounce their last blessing. We get a glimpse even of the dying face of Moses. These are men of all time; yet they are temporal men; they have a secular work to do, and it ought to be dated. But the prophets are timeless. They deal with the things of eternity—things which never grow old, things which are the same yesterday and to-day and forever. We must not think of them as dying, as dead. We must not dig for them a grave or carve for them an inscription. We must see them ever before us. We must think of them as abiding, permanent. We must view them as unchanging with the changing of the years. We must receive their message, not as a voice from the past, but as a revelation from the hour. We must hear Ezekiel still speaking on the banks of Chebar, still exhorting to personal purity—crying to the men of England as he cried to the men of Judah, 'Forget not the value of your individual souls!'

MEET me alone, O Lord, meet me alone! Let me feel, for one moment, the awful dignity of my own soul! I am not so much afraid of Thy judgment-day as of the general assize which men have figured there. I fear lest my sight of the crowd may dim the sight of my own importance. I have heard men say that my danger lies in my pride. No; it lies in my humility. I have not realised the possibilities of my own soul. I have viewed myself as a *fragment* of the race, as a *drop* of the stream. I have thought myself a rag driven by the wind—impelled by a force behind me. In the hour of my vices I have said, 'These have come from my fathers.' I have sheltered myself under my own nothingness. I have blamed the past ages for my sin. I have hid myself from Thee among the lives of my ancestors; I have called myself the victim of heredity; I have crouched behind the multitude. Bring me out from the covert of the fig-leaves! Let me hear Thy voice in the garden speaking to *me* —to me alone! Is it not written, 'When they were alone, He expounded all things to His disciples'? Was it not when the spectators had all *gone out* that Thou didst speak to her who was a sinner? So let it be with me! Send the

multitude away—the multitude of my ancestors! Meet me on my own threshold! Meet me when the sun has gone down, when the crowd has melted, when the pulse of the city beats low! Meet me in the stillness of my own heart, in the quiet of my own room, in the silence of my own reflective hour! Reveal to me my greatness! Flash Thy light upon the treasures hid in my field! Show me the diamond in my dust! Bring me the pearl from my sea! Tell me the stars in my sky! Read me the charter of my human freedom! When Thou hast magnified my soul I shall learn my need of *Thee!*

CHAPTER XI

DANIEL THE DARING

AMONG the ten thousand whom Nebuchadnezzar carried into Babylon were two young men who have reached distinction—Ezekiel and Daniel. They were companions in exile, but they were not exactly companions in destiny. Both, as I have said, have reached distinction; but they have not both reached it in the same way; Ezekiel climbed to it, Daniel soared to it. The qualities of the men were different. Ezekiel was less fitted to catch at once the popular eye. It is not that Daniel was more showy. We are told in the parable that there are seeds which spring up quickly because they have not much deepness of earth. But there are causes of rapid growth other than superficiality. Two minds may be equally solid and their work equally durable, and yet the one may come to light much sooner than the other. The sphere of the one may be mental and the sphere of the other

physical. Work in the region of abstract thought reaches the eye much quicker than work in the region of material fact. And that is the difference between Ezekiel and Daniel. Both were faithful labourers—labourers without tinsel and without meretricious ornament. But the labour of Ezekiel was within; the labour of Daniel was without. Ezekiel revealed thoughts; Daniel foretold events. Ezekiel laid bare the state of hearts; Daniel laid bare the state of empires. Ezekiel lifted the veil from life; Daniel lifted the veil from history. The result was that in public estimation Daniel was far up the hill ere Ezekiel's ascent had even begun. Daniel's course was meteoric, because, in addition to being the man of God he was the man suited to the hour.

The figure of Daniel has received more close scrutiny than any form in the Gallery. Yet I think he has been studied precisely in those points in which he is not representative. Men have inquired as to the date of the picture, the painter of the picture, the antiquity of the inscription on the picture. These are very interesting questions, but they are not representative questions; they do not touch the heart of the matter. They are of interest to students of

Eastern history, but they contribute nothing to the study of man as man. The crucial thing about Daniel, from an artistic point of view, is the universality of his appeal. What is that in him which appeals to all? The powers of the magician? No. The vision of the future? No. The service to his exiled people? No. The authenticity of the relics which surround his person? No. The one universal feature of the portrait is its answer to the question, What is the quality most needed by a young man? The Book of Daniel I regard as beyond all things the young man's guide-book—the only book which has deliberately pointed out the quality which is essential to the formation of character. It has set itself to solve the problem, What is the secret of manliness? And the solution is so original, so unconventional, and so confirmed by modern experience, that we may well pause to study this phase of the picture.

If a plebiscite were proposed containing answers to the query, What is the ultimate requirement for a man's success in secular life? it is doubtful if any one would give the reply of the Book of Daniel. Some would say, intellect; some, prudence; some, sobriety; some, piety. This book admits the need of all these;

but it says that there must be something *behind* all of them. It says there is a quality without which every one of these qualities must be neutralised. What is it? It is courage—the spirit of daring. We do not commonly associate this with a prosaic thing like good-conduct; we think of it rather as belonging to the naughty paths of romance. But the Book of Daniel puts it in the daily walk. The peculiarity of this man's courage is that from beginning to end it was laid in an unpoetic scene. It never had any stimulus from without—not even in the lions' den. It was hailed by no spectators, cheered by no plaudits, accompanied by no bands of music. No eye looked on but the eye of conscience, no voice said 'Well done!' but the voice of duty. His was no tournament, no visible battle-field, no audible debate where the hearers clap their hands. It was a field without spectators, a debate without auditors, a combat whose fierceness and intensity were felt by himself alone.

I recognise three stages in the courage of Daniel. I would call them respectively the trial of the flesh, the trial of the mind, and the trial of the spirit. As these occur in chronological order, they may be taken to mark the

epochs in Daniel's development—as, indeed, they mark the crucial seasons in the development of every youth. Let us glance at them, one by one.

The first scene is the trial of the flesh. The curtain rises in Babylon. We see Daniel moving already in the higher circles—a popular young man whose company is much in request. He dines at the tables of the rich in a city where the tables of the rich were groaning with luxuries and when it was the fashion to be dissipated. But Daniel pursues an unwonted policy. He joins the guests without joining in their revelry. He puts a rein upon himself. He avoids all excesses; he comes out from the banquet as sober as he went in. Now, let us understand where his trial lay. It was not that he had to resist the temptation of physical appetite; it was that he had to resist the temptation of being a man 'up-to-date.' What he required was not self-restraint; it was courage. The temptation to intemperance was not that intemperance was pleasant, but that it was 'good form.' It was this which made resistance to it a courageous thing. So far as the wine-cup is merely a pleasure, it may be resisted *without* courage. Nay, in this

respect, a man's greatest safety may be his cowardice—his fear for his own health. But where the use of the wine-cup is 'good form,' the case is very different. What is needed then is a brave heart, and no substitute will suffice. It requires a daring man to say, 'I decline to be in the fashion; I elect to stand alone.' To say that, is at once to put yourself in a den of lions; and in this case the mouths of the lions are *not* shut. Daniel, from the very outset, was on his own line—the line of the greatest resistance, the line where he had no choice but to dare. His courage is never more conspicuous than in his festive hour.

For remember, Babylon sanctified physical excesses—made them 'good form.' Excess in the outward was her characteristic; she was like Rome in the days of the empire. Paul, in speaking of that empire, exhorted his converts, 'Be not conformed to this world!'—to that which is reckoned the law of etiquette. He would have applied the same words to the dweller in Babylon. Babylon, like Rome, put a social imprimatur upon her practices; to refuse conformity was to incur ostracism. It is this exposure to ostracism which makes it incumbent on every Daniel to be, before all

things, a soldier. Provincial vices can be cured by an appeal to public opinion. But if public opinion, if the opinion of Babylon itself, is on the *side* of these vices, if the moral practice of society has crystallised them into custom and the leaders of fashion have fanned them into favour, the man who resists them will require the spirit of a hero.

The second scene opens; and it is a change of environment. The first revealed Daniel at the banquet; this reveals Daniel in the study. The trial of the flesh has been succeeded by a trial of the intellect. He is poring over a problem. Nebuchadnezzar has had a dream. He has summoned what would now be called the Fellows of the Royal Society to interpret that dream. But he has accompanied the invitation with a threat; all who fail are to be put to death. Now, a threat has efficacy only where you want to restrain—not where you wish to quicken. Its influence is distinctively a restraining influence—it can bind the hand, it can bridle the tongue, it can bar the footsteps. It can also bind, bridle and bar the intellect. But, suppose your object is, like Nebuchadnezzar's, to give *rein* to the intellect, the threat is in its wrong sphere. If the teacher

says to a class of schoolboys, 'A single error in spelling will involve a severe flogging,' the thing involved will be almost a certainty. Probably every one of these boys will get his penalty. And why so? Not because the threat has proved powerless, but because it has been powerful in restraining the intellect. It has clouded the mental vision; it has dimmed the memory; it has diverted the attention; it has prevented the concentration of resolve. Nebuchadnezzar, for his purpose, did the worst thing he could have done.

Now, Daniel was one of this Royal Society, and was therefore under the threat of the king. Reading the narrative in my own way, I understand that *one* could save the *Society*. Several of the members had already failed; but as long as one remained untried there was hope for all. Daniel sets himself to solve the problem and to save his brethren. I do not suppose his colleagues did not try along with him; but Daniel alone succeeded. The question is, why? Was it because he was more learned than the rest—more skilled in Chaldean mysteries than the Chaldeans? If you read the narrative thus, you miss the point. That which turned the scale between Daniel

and his colleagues was courage. The others were less courageous than he. They had the threat before them and it paralysed them. It bound their talents in a napkin; it kept them from clear seeing. I do not think we are adequately aware of the presence of this law. It is my opinion that in the sphere of practical judgment humanity errs less from want of intellect than from want of nerve. There have been more prizes lost through excitement than through deficiency; there have been more examinations unsuccessful through fear than through unpreparedness. We speak of the impulsiveness of youth. Its impulsiveness is its anxiety, its distrust of the future moment. That is why it is unable to wait. Its impetuosity is not want of patience but want of confidence. Its temerity comes from its timidity. It speaks sharply when it is shy. It acts foolishly when it is flurried. It speculates rashly when it fears ruin. If it had more courage it would have more success.

Now, what is the cause of Daniel's courage? Why is it that he, at a time when his life was threatened, was able to sit down and calmly study a problem? Was it that he had been gifted with an extraordinary amount of cool-

ness? Was it because his nerves were constitutionally still? Was it because he had expunged from his nature all the elements of passion? No; it was because there had entered into his soul a *new* element of passion. Daniel had ceased to fear for his life because he had begun to fear for something else—the lives of others. What made him study the problem was not the instinct of self-preservation but the instinct of benevolence. He knew that upon the success of its solution the lives of the whole Royal Society depended. His desire was to save the Royal Society, to be the redeemer of his fellow men. His courage was the absence of personal fear; but it was reached by an impersonal fear. It is only *personal* fear that weakens intellectual effort; the anxiety for others is a quickener of the judgment. Daniel escaped from individual trepidation and all the mental mists that accompany it; but he did so by entering into a trepidation which was *not* individual—a terror for the fate of others, a dread which came from the pulsations of the heart of his brother man and filled him with the intensity of sorrows not his own.

The truth is—paradoxical as it may sound

—the difference between human courage and animal courage lies purely in this, that the one is weighted and the other reckless. Human courage in one direction springs from cowardice in another direction, and this is its glory. Your bravery in any cause is exactly proportionate to the fear which makes you undertake that cause. Daniel had got rid of his own dread by becoming weighted with the dread for others. Nobody was more convinced than Daniel of the difference between animal courage and human courage. More than any of the Jewish prophets he had before him the ideal of manliness. He saw with the eye of the spirit the dynasties of earth pass by—each imitating the courage of some animal form. He saw the lion—the courage that roars, the bear—the courage that rends, the panther—the courage that springs; and then he saw one 'like unto a son of man' who received a permanent kingdom. What he beheld breaking on the ages was a new ideal of bravery—that ideal which has received its culmination and its type in the Cross of Calvary. Calvary was the bravest deed ever done in this world; but it was the product of fear. Is it not written, 'He was heard in the thing He feared'—lib-

erated from the dread that His sorrows might prove in vain. Calvary is the courage of love —the courage of the mother for that child of hers who is immured in the burning house; it is fearless through the very strength of its impersonal fear. The crowning glory of Daniel will ever be that he aspired to a courage like that of the Son of Man.

I come now to the third stage in the trial of Daniel's courage—the trial of the spirit as distinguished from that of the flesh and that of the mind. When the first scene opened we found Daniel at the banquet. When the second scene opened we found him in the study. When the third scene opens we find him in the spot which ever since has been inseparably associated with his name—the den of lions. His trial in this case was distinctively a religious trial. A singular decree had been promulgated by the court of Babylon. Prompted by jealousy of the rising Jewish favourite, a powerful Jewish faction persuaded the weak Darius to test his loyalty by threatening his religion. They procured the passing of a law which enjoined on every man abstinence from prayer during the entire space of thirty days, and, as the penalty of trans-

gression, sentenced every delinquent to the den of lions. You will observe, this was to Daniel essentially a trial of the spirit. It was a command to give up thinking—that particular form of thinking which was his very life and atmosphere—the exercise of devotion. The trial of the spirit is the command to lie passive—the imprisonment of vital action. You will observe, too, that the affliction imposed on Daniel's spiritual life had its sting in the same cause—the command to lie passive. The den of lions is a special kind of sorrow—a kind of sorrow which belongs exclusively to the innermost life; and, as it recurs again and again in human experience, we may well consider its character.

There are two kinds of affliction in this world—labour and heavy-ladenness. The former is the necessity to work; the latter is the necessity to fold the hands. The Bible Gallery has the type of each. Its type of the first is David; its type of the second is Daniel. The extreme antithesis to Daniel in the den of lions is David in the fight with Goliath. It is the difference between active and passive courage. David is in the presence of two armies; Daniel is sealed up in a cave, alone. David has

a sling and a stone; Daniel can say 'Nothing in my hand I bring.' David has the stimulus of romance; Daniel is in the depths of prose. David has a human antagonist; Daniel is at the mercy of dumb circumstances. David requires the force of the arm; Daniel needs the fortitude of the soul.

Now, of these two spheres, the den is the more trying; and it is so by reason of its passiveness. The heart never needs so much strength as when it is waiting for the blow. I may have only a sling and a stone, yet, if I am allowed to use them, I have, for the time, a sedative. But if my task is simply to bear, if mine is only the part of the invalid, if the lions are all within my own den, if my pain is not helping the world nor is even seen by the world, if the circumstances that struggle with me are speechless and declare not the purpose of their own onset, then indeed I miss the Philistines, I miss Goliath, I miss the destiny of David.

But there is one point about Daniel's trial which, so far as I know, has not received attention. Has it ever struck any one that, with all its bitterness, it is the embodiment of that very truth which he was specially sent to re-

veal. The scene in the cave of Darius is the acted parable of Daniel's whole teaching. What is this den of lions but the symbol and sequel of his own prophecy! Did he not see one like unto a son of man prevailing over the lion, the bear and the panther! Did he not behold the kingdom of humanity put to silence the roaring of the forest! What is the picture of this solitary man dominating a den of lions but the picture of what *creation* reveals! Let us consider the marvel of this fourth kingdom, this human kingdom.

Man has been dropped into the cave late in the afternoon. The cave is already filled with creatures of intense ferocity. From any physical point of view man is vastly inferior. So far as outward equipment goes he is no match for the denizens of the den. What is to become of this frail structure? It has been hermetically sealed in an inclosure for which it is not suited. It has found there, already in possession, creatures eminently suited—keener of sense, fleeter of step, louder of cry, fiercer of passion, stronger of build. Will it have any chance in the struggle—this fragile form, this insignificant force? Yes; and it has won. Daniel has conquered the lions, has made them

shut their mouths. By the very consciousness of superiority, the meek have inherited the earth. Without striving or crying, without raging or roaring, without even lifting up his voice, Daniel has stood conqueror in the cave; and the lion has been silent, and the bear has been docile, and the leopard has been content to lie down. The life apparently the most poor in spirit has received the kingdom.

Whence this unexpected pre-eminence? I have said that it comes from a consciousness of superiority. But whence came that? Within the cave man is not superior; where does he get his consciousness that he is above the lions? Let Daniel answer. He says that, before receiving the kingdom, the form in the likeness of man 'came to the Ancient of days.' He means that the secret of his power was an influence *outside* the cave—his religion. He was the only creature that made an approach to the Eternal. Of all within the den, he alone bent the knee—came to the Ancient of days. To give up prayer even for a month was to Daniel a more dangerous experiment than to enter without physical weapons into the den Darius had prepared for him. His courage is *again* the fruit of his fear. It is this which

makes it superior to the courage of the lions. Mere recklessness might have given way in the unromantic solitude, in the war without witnesses, in the struggle without spectators. But the courage that is born not of carelessness but of care, the courage that is bred not of fearlessness but of fear, the courage that is inflamed not by instinct but by reason—this is indifferent either to crowd or to solitude. The courage distinctive of man is brave from what it dreads, strong by what it shrinks from. It meets the lions because it flies from the lepers; it endures the furnace of fire that it may escape the winter frost. Therefore it is independent of excitement; it heeds not the curtain's fall. It can endure in solitude; it can shine at midnight. It can remain in the heart of Daniel when the cave is sealed by a stone and he is alone with the lions.

I THANK thee, O Lord, for the courage and the kingdom of the Son of Man. I thank Thee that the still small voice has conquered the thunder, the earthquake and the fire. I thank Thee that Thou hast revealed to men a new ideal of bravery—a bravery born of fear. In the old kingdoms the lion and the lamb were

separate; daring could not dwell beside shrinking. But now that *Thy* kingdom has come, the lion can lie down with the lamb—courage and fear can embrace each other. I would not ask of Thee the courage of recklessness or the courage of despair or the courage of conquered feeling; make me brave by my fears, O Lord! Let me see the dangers of Babylon! Let me gaze on its sins and sorrows! Let me follow its famished crowds! Let me look on its struggling millions! Let me pity its children untended, its youth unguided, its men unfit for survival! Let me tremble for its sick without succour, its weary without welcome, its erring without exhortation, its ruined without rescue, its feeble without friends, its fallen without fellowship, its guilty without a glance at their God! May their danger make me dauntless, may their peril give me power; may I be brave by their brokenness! May their cry give me courage, their struggle bring me strength, their pain make me potent, their need lend me nerve, their burden send me boldness, their wrongs reverberate like war-notes in my heart! Then shall it be said, 'Thy gentleness has made thee great'; then shall the lion flourish by the strength of the lamb!

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